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THE LUGGIE.



E. S. Stone

THE LUGGIE

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY DAVID GRAY.

WITH

A MEMOIR BY JAMES HEDDERWICK, AND A PREFATORY
NOTICE BY R. M. MILNES, M.P.

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CONTENTS.

	Page
THE LUGGIE	1
IN THE SHADOWS	63
POEMS NAMED AND WITHOUT NAMES	97
MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS	139

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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

IN the Spring of 1860 I received a letter signed DAVID GRAY, enclosing some manuscript verses. The writer stated that he was a Scotchman, who had had the ordinary education of the artisans of that country; that he had written these and other Poems, and desired my advice as to his coming up to London and making his way there in the career of Literature. I was struck with the superiority of the verses to almost all the productions of self-taught men that had been brought under my observation, and I therefore answered the letter at some length, recognising the remarkable faculty which Mr. Gray seemed to me to possess; urging him to cultivate it not exclusively nor even especially but to make it part of his general culture and intellectual development; and above all desiring him not to make the perilous venture of a London literary life, but, at any rate for some time, to content himself with such opportunities as he had, and to strive to obtain

some professional independence, however humble, in which his poetical powers might securely expand and become the solace of his existence instead of the precarious purveyor of his daily bread. A few weeks afterwards I was told a young man wished to see me, and when he came into the room I at once saw it could be no other than the young Scotch Poet. It was a light, well-built, but somewhat stooping figure, with a countenance that at once brought strongly to my recollection a cast of the face of Shelley in his youth, which I had seen at Mr. Leigh Hunt's. There was the same full brow, out-looking eyes, and sensitive melancholy mouth. He told me at once that he had come to London in consequence of my letter, as from the tone of it he was sure I should befriend him. I was dismayed at this unexpected result of my advice, and could do no more than press him to return home as soon as possible. I painted as darkly as I could the chances and difficulties of a literary struggle in the crowded competition of this great city, and how strong a swimmer it required to be not to sink in such a sea of tumultuous life. "No—he would not return." I determined in my own mind that he should do so before I myself left town for the country, but at the same time I believed that he might derive advantage from a short personal experience of hard realities. He had a confidence in his own powers, a simple

certainly of his own worth, which I saw would keep him in good heart and preserve him from base temptations. He refused to take money, saying he had enough to go on with; but I gave him some light literary work, for which he was very grateful. When he came to me again, I went over some of his verse with him, and I shall not forget the passionate gratification he shewed when I told him that, in my judgment, he was an undeniable Poet. After this admission he was ready to submit to my criticism or correction, though he was sadly depressed at the rejection of one of his Poems, over which he had evidently spent much labour and care, by the Editor of a distinguished popular periodical, to whom I had sent it with a hearty recommendation. His indeed was not a spirit to be seriously injured by a temporary disappointment; but when he fell ill so soon afterwards, one had something of the feeling of regret that the notorious review of Keats inspires in connection with the premature loss of the author of "Endymion."

It was only a few weeks after his arrival in London that the poor boy came to my house apparently under the influence of violent fever. He said he had caught cold in the wet weather, having been insufficiently protected by clothing; but had delayed coming to me for fear of giving me unnecessary trouble. I at once sent him back to his lodgings,

which were sufficiently comfortable, and put him under good medical superintendence. It soon became apparent that pulmonary disease had set in, but there were good hopes of arresting its progress. I visited him often, and every time with increasing interest. He had somehow found out that his lungs were affected, and the image of the destiny of Keats was ever before him. I leave to his excellent friend Mr. Hedderwick to tell the rest of this sad story. I never saw him after he left London. I much regret that imperative circumstances did not permit me to take him under my roof, that I at least might have the satisfaction of thinking that all human means of saving his life had been exhausted: for there was in him the making of a great man. His lyrical faculty, astonishing as it was, might not have outlived the ardour and susceptibilities of youth; but there was that simple persistence of character about him, which is so prominent in the best of his countrymen. I was much struck with seeing how he had hitherto made the best of all his scanty opportunities; how he had got all the good out of the homely virtues of his domestic life with no sign of reproach at the plain practical people about him for not making much of his poetry and sympathising with his visions of fame. These indeed must have seemed, to say the least, intolerably presumptuous to those about him, and indeed to most of those with

whom he came in contact. I own I heeded them little. It has always appeared to me that if a certain brightness of hope and presumption of genius in young men who have had all the advantages of the best education in their reach, and whose youth has grown up in careful classical culture and with the associations of a refined society, be regarded with a compassionate interest and feelings no severer than a gentle ridicule, a far milder condemnation and deeper sympathy should be given to those who, without the ordinary processes of mental progress, without the free interchange of thought, and above all, without the means of weighing their own with other intelligences, have within themselves the certain conviction of superiority and the perceptions of an interminable vista of Beauty and of Truth. Such minds feel themselves to be, as it were, exceptional creatures in the moral world in which they happen to be placed; and it is as unreasonable to expect from them a just appreciation of their own powers, as it would be to require an accurate notion of distance from a being freshly gifted with sight. How is he to distinguish the near and commonplace from the distant and rare? How is he to know that such have been the thoughts and such the expressions of thousands before him? How is he to possess the distinctions of taste and the discriminations of judgment which a long, even though super-

ficial, literary education confers on so many undistinguished natures and uncritical minds? Therefore when the mere boy who can write such poems as these in the shadow of death has talked of being buried in Westminster Abbey, let not the feeling be other than that which would meet the aspirations of Stephenson the apprentice, or Nelson the midshipman.

It is also significant that a good deal of the overconfidence which David Gray manifested gave way as soon as he knew he was really appreciated and cared for. His vanity sang forth, as it were, in the night of his discouragement, to give himself fortitude to bear the solitude and the gloom. With all his admiration of his "Luggie," he clearly could not help in his mind comparing it with the "Seasons"; and then he writes,—“When I read Thomson, I despair.” Soon after an almost bombastic estimate of his own mental progress, he becomes thoroughly ashamed of himself, and says, “that being bare of all recommendations,” he had “lied to his own conscience,” deeming that “if he called himself a great man, others would be bound to believe him.” Surely this was a spirit to which knowledge would have given a just humility, and for which praise and love were especially necessary, for they would have brought with them modesty and truth.

I would recommend the readers of these Poems to keep in mind how deeply they are based on the

few phenomena of nature that came within the Poet's observation. He revels in the frost and snow until the winter of his own sorrow and sickness becomes too hard for him to bear, and then he only asks for

“One clear day, a snowdrop, and sweet air.”

The lost illusion of the cuckoo, when it was transformed into

“A slender bird of modest brown,”

is missed, as something he cannot afford to spare in his scanty store of natural delights. The “Luggie” itself ever remains the simple stream that it really is and is not decked-out in any fantastic or in-harmonious colouring. He described in a letter to me the rapturous emotions with which the rich hues and picturesque forms of the coast of South Devonshire filled his breast; and I believe that these very feelings would have prolonged his life, had circumstances permitted him to enjoy them.

I will not here assume the position of a poetical critic, both because I know such criticism to be dreary and unsatisfactory, and because I am conscious that the personal interest I took in David Gray is likely in some degree to influence my judgment. There is in truth no critic of poetry but the man who enjoys it, and the amount of gratification felt is the only just measure of criticism. I believe however that I should have found much pleasure in

these Poems if I had met with them accidentally and if I had been unaware of the strange and pathetic incidents of their production. But the public mind will not separate the intrinsic merits of the verses from the story of the writer, any more than the works and fate of Keats or of Chatterton; we value all connected with the being of every true Poet because it is the highest form of Nature that man is permitted to study and enjoy.

R. M. MILNES.

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

It is unusual, I fear, to produce a Memoir of a mere literary aspirant—of one whose place in the world of letters remains to be ascertained—and concerning whom but little interest can be felt. Yet, whatever may be the ultimate verdict on the Poems contained in this volume, there is something in the short, ambitious, and melancholy career of their author, which may perhaps assist the reader to judge accurately of their merits. There are poets of a high, although not perhaps of the highest order of intellect, whose writings are a continual reflex of their own inner selves—who lay bare their hearts in their works—and, without some knowledge of whom, in their personal character and relations, it would be difficult to form any generous, or even fair estimate of their productions.

Of this intensely subjective class of bards was DAVID GRAY, the author of “The Luggie, and other Poems.” His life, which embraced only his passionate youth-time, was tremulously, almost morbidly, fanciful. It is necessary to know this, not in order that his effusions may be judged charitably, but in order that they may be judged truly. What might

have been weakness or affectation in a mature man, was with him a natural instinct of tenderness. Had he lived to watch the fate of his book, he would probably have been as sensitive as Keats to the shafts of criticism. Consumption, ending fatally, has saved him from that ordeal. He is gone where no censure can wound, where no detraction can affect him; but a life as strangely bright and beautiful as it was unhappily brief, seems to suggest a memory that should be guarded by loving hands.

David Gray was born on the 29th of January, 1838, on the banks of the Luggie, about eight miles distant from the city of Glasgow. His precise place of birth was Duntiblae, a little row of houses on the south side of the stream; but, while he was a mere child, his parents removed to Merkland, on the north side, where they still continue to dwell. All his associations, therefore, clustered about Merkland, which is situated within a mile of the town of Kirkintilloch, on the Gartshore road. It has neither the dignity of a village, nor the primitive rudeness of a clachan, but is simply a group of road-side cottages, some half-dozen in number, humble, but with slated roofs, having pleasant patches of garden in front and behind, and wholly occupied by handloom weavers and their families, who receive their webs and their inadequate remuneration from the manufacturing warehouses of the great city. His parents are both living—an industrious and exemplary couple, with the constant click of the shuttle in one division of their cottage, and with

doubtless the occasional squall of juvenile voices in the other. David was the eldest of eight children, there being four boys and three girls now left. The Luggie flows past Merkland at the foot of a precipitous bank, and shortly afterwards loses itself among the shadows of Oxcang, with its fine old mansion-house and rookery, and debouches at Kirkintilloch into the Kelvin, one of the tributaries of the Clyde, celebrated in Scottish song. It is a mere unpretending rivulet, yet sufficient to turn the wheel of an old meal-mill at the straggling village of Waterside, a little way up the stream, though in a lower level of the valley. Neither, except at one or two points, is it of a character to attract a lover of the picturesque. But although not particularly fitted for a painter's eye, it sufficed for a poet's love. The little bright-eyed first-born of the Merkland handloom weaver had the more accessible nooks of it by heart long before his ambitious feet could carry him to more beautiful regions; and although, in later years, he extended the radius of his rambles, and made intimate acquaintance with the magnificent glens and cascades in the recesses of the Campsie fells, his tiny "natal stream," at the foot of the familiar "brae," so associated in his heart with the recollections of childhood and the endearments of home, never lost its freshness or its charm.

Other appeals to his imagination were not wanting. At a distance of some miles to the north was the noble outline of the Campsie range; villages of smoking industry dotted the valley and plain; to

the south-west Glasgow toiled all the week under its cloud, and consecrated the listening Sabbath with the faint clang of its bells; while nightly to the south the country was ablaze, and the sky reddened, with the numerous blast-furnaces to which the west of Scotland chiefly owes its preponderating wealth. Nor was the locality, in other respects, deficient in interest. Close to Kirkintilloch the Roman invasion had left its tide-mark in the shape of certain easily distinguishable remains of the famous wall of Antoninus; there, too, was the Forth and Clyde Canal, with its leisurely craft looking picturesque in the landscape, as if sitting for artistic effect, or rejoicing in the land-rest between the turmoil of two oceans; while the occasional rush of some railway train along its geological groove—now hidden, anon revealed, and soon wholly out of sight, and out of hearing—marked the advent of a new and more active era. All these things the “marvellous boy” must have daily noted; but still it was mainly the music of his own little Luggie which murmured melodiously in his verse, and which he began at length fondly to dream of linking immortally with his name.

Perhaps in no other country save Scotland could a lad in Gray’s position—the son of a handloom weaver, burdened with a large family, and living in the outlying suburb of a common country town—have attained the advantage of a classical education. His first teacher was Mr. Adams, who still conducts, with efficiency, the Kirkintilloch parish school.

While under this excellent preceptor, his literary bias became strikingly apparent. Zealous at his tasks, bright with precocious intellect, an unconscionable devourer of books, and personally ambitious of distinction, it was early intended that he should devote himself to the office of the Christian ministry in connection with the Free Church of Scotland, to which his parents belonged. When about fourteen years of age he was accordingly sent to Glasgow, where, supporting himself to a considerable extent by laborious tuition, first as pupil-teacher in a public school in Bridgeton, and afterwards as Queen's scholar in the Free Church Normal Seminary, he contrived to attend the Humanity, Greek, and other classes in the University during four successive sessions. Having likewise obtained some employment as a private tutor, he found it necessary to add French to his lingual acquisitions. But whatever progress he may have made in his more severe studies, it soon became evident that the bent of his mind was poetical rather than theological. His imagination became much more possessed with the beauties of Greek mythology than with the dogmas of Calvinistic faith. In place of composing sermons, he betook himself to writing verses. Many of these, bearing the *nom de plume* of "Will Gurney," were published, from time to time, in the columns of the "Glasgow Citizen"—a journal in which, some years before, Alexander Smith, the author of the "Life-Drama," had made his first appearance in print; and abandoning the idea of the pulpit, and detesting the

drudgery of the ferule, the determination seems gradually to have taken root in his mind of adopting literature as a profession.

His letters at this time betray an extraordinary and altogether unhealthy degree of excitement, as of one setting out on some adventurous path, and uncertain whether he was a genius or a dreamer. In one of these addressed to myself, he says: "This is the third note with which I have attempted to preface the lines I have enclosed. I know not what to say about them. They are the faint but true expressions of my imagination, though deficient—alas! how deficient to symbolise the beauty of the cloudland I have visited, or the ideal love of my soul. Perhaps you may deem this the raving of a restless spirit—the spasmodic mawkishness of a 'metre-balladmonger:' but do not, for God's sake, do not. If you knew how often I have halted in the middle of the lobby of your office with a bundle of MSS.,—if you knew the wild dreams of literary ambition I am ever framing, yet all the time conscious of my own utter insignificance, my dear sir, you would pity me." These hectic sentences, accidentally preserved, are characteristic of the kind of desperate frenzy with which he was accustomed to compensate for, and avenge, on paper, the shrinking physical bashfulness of his nature. Shortly afterwards, when I had met him in society, I fancied I detected, in the restless yet timid twinkle of his dark eye, a lack of philosophic balance, a keen and vivid intellect united with a certain nervous incapacity of

self-reliance, an irrepressible impulse to lofty literary enterprise, shaken with maddening apprehensions of failure.

But neither his circumstances nor his temperament permitted him to rest. My acquaintance with him was too slight and casual, irrespectively of difference of age, to invite or win his confidence. He had, however, several companions to whom he had been attracted by kindred sympathies and tastes, and with whom he often drew glowing and extravagant pictures of the future, and as often obliterated them as vain. Among these was Arthur Sutherland, a colleague of his own in the Free Church Normal Seminary, and now a respectable teacher at Maryburgh, near Dingwall. His letters to Sutherland, written early in 1860, when he had attained the age of twenty-two, are full of fantastic schemes to be undertaken by them jointly, one of which was to gather what money they could, meet on a certain day in Edinburgh, make their way to London on foot, and of course take the literary world by storm! These brave and foolish notions originated probably in a state of mind which he confesses. "Solitude," he says, "and an utter want of all physical exercise, are working deplorable ravages in my nervous system. The crow's-feet are blackening about my eyes; and I cannot think to face the sunlight. When I ponder alone over my own inability to move the world—to move one heart in it—no wonder that my 'face gathers blackness.' Tennyson beautifully, and (so far) truly says, that the face is 'the form and

colour of the mind and life.' If you saw *me!*" Another congenial spirit was William Freeland, a native of Kirkintilloch, somewhat older in years, and now filling, with honour, a responsible position in connection with the Glasgow press. Many a ramble did he enjoy with the latter among the scenes of their common boyhood, and many a dream did they both dream of how greatness was to be attained, and how fame was to be conquered. In Freeland he found a prudent, as well as a sympathetic adviser, who took every opportunity of curbing his too impetuous enthusiasm, and saving him from immolation on the critical slights and antagonisms which literary precocity and assumption are certain to provoke, unless when under the sanctity of a last illness, or the shelter of a premature grave.

The beginning of 1860 was a feverish and critical period in the life of our young author. His term of service in the Free Normal Seminary had expired. He was idle—that is, he was bringing in no money; and prompted by his parents to find work, and impelled by his own ambition to seek fame, his case dilated, in his own eyes, into one of singular and desperate urgency. But was he really idle for a day—for an hour? I venture to suppose that there were few busier brains and fingers in existence than his. Only twenty-two! and yet with sundry languages mastered, with whole libraries read, and with many a goodly quire of paper covered with matter which men high in the world of letters regarded as at least remarkable for his years! Know-

ing that unaided he was powerless for instant action, and that he could not afford to wait for the tardy rewards of modest merit, he seems to have taken to letter-writing on a large and bold scale, assuming the claims of genius for the favours which fortune had denied. He had completed a poem of a thousand lines. Would no one help him to get it published? Writing to Sutherland, he says, "I sent to G. H. Lewes, to Professor Masson, to Professor Aytoun, to Disraeli; but no one will *read* it. They swear they have no time. For my part, I think the poem will live, and so I care not whether I were drowned to-morrow." Again he says: "I spoke to you of the refusals which had been unfairly given my poem. Better to have a poem refused than a poem unwritten." But I have evidence before me that he received considerate and kindly replies to some, at least, of his appeals, no doubt blended with wholesome advice, though, on the whole, most creditable to the courtesy and generosity of men having enormous demands on their time, addressing a youth, an utter stranger to them, who wrote as if fancying he had a mission to electrify the world.

His first influential friend was Mr. Sydney Dobell, whose genius as a poet is not greater than his thorough kindness as a man. To that gentleman he introduced himself by means of a short note, dated November, 1859. It was addressed to him at Cleeve Tower, Cheltenham, and began as follows:

"*First*: Cleeve Tower I take to be a pleasant place, clothed with ivy, and shaded by ancestral beeches: at all

events, it is mightily different from my mother's home. Let that be understood distinctly.

"*Second*: I am a poet. Let that also be understood distinctly.

"*Third*: Having at the present time only 8s. a-week, I wish to improve my position, for the sake of gratifying and assisting a mother whom I love beyond the conception of the vulgar.

"These, then, are my premises, and the inference takes the form of this request. Will you—a poet—as far as you can, assist another, a younger poet (of twenty) in a way not to wound his feelings, or hurt his independency of spirit."

The quaint confidence with which he enclosed his certificates of character, and asked his influence, probably excited, in the mind of Mr. Dobell, a curiosity, if not an interest, regarding the writer. At all events, a correspondence ensued, at times very wild and melodramatic on the one side, and full of stern counsel and substantial kindness on the other. This correspondence, extending, at intervals, over the remainder of poor Gray's life, I have not before me in any complete form. But from a confusion of documents kindly placed in my hands, a few characteristic passages may in the course of this memoir be culled. Dobell's first answer to Gray does not appear to have been preserved; but it elicited a poetical response, of which the following is the opening passage:

"O for the vowell'd flow of knightly Spenser,
Whose soul rain'd fragrance, like a golden censer
Chain-swung in Grecian temple, that I might
To your fine soul aread my love aright.
With kind forbearance, birth of native feeling,
A heart of mould celestial revealing—

You bore the vagaries of one, consuming
His inner spirit with divine illuming;
You bore the vagaries of one, who dreams—
What time his spirit, 'mid the streaky gleams
Of autumn sunset wanders, finding there
Heaven's ante-chamber, vermeil-flush'd, and fair
In feathery purples, fringed with orange-dun—
The porch of bliss, the threshold of the sun.
Oh had I known thee when the Auroral birth
Of poesy o'erwhelmed me, and this earth
Became an angel-finger'd lyre dim-sounding,
To souls like thine in echoes sweet abounding!
Then would thy presence, brother, have fulfill'd
A yearning of my spirit, and instill'd
An inspiration in me, like a star
Luminous, tremulous, and oracular!
But far away, with all my hopes and fears,
I wrung a blessing from the flowing years,
And nursed what my good God had given me,
The birthright of great souls—dear poesy.
Now have I found thee, but, dear heart! the golden
Dream to which my soul is so beholden
Is circumscribed and shorn, because I am
A beggar of thy bounty. Is the balm
Of thy dear converse all in *this* to end,
And shall the beggar never be the FRIEND?"

We have here, with some imperfections, an audible echo of the earlier style of Keats, as well as a sample of the varied means which Gray employed to wrest from men of distinction, not merely their recognition, but their friendship. Writing in plain prose to Mr. Dobell, I find him thus foolishly vaticinating: "I tell you that, if I live, my name and fame shall be second to few of any age, and to none of my own. I speak thus because I *feel*

power. Nor is this feeling an artificial disease, as it was in Rousseau, but a feeling which has grown with me since ever I could think." That this extravagance must have been promptly and sharply rebuked, I learn by a subsequent letter from Gray, dated December, 1859. "You were pretty heavy on me," he says, "and my egotism, as you called it. If you knew me a little better, and my aims, and how I have struggled to gain the little knowledge I have, you would account me modest. Mark: it is not what I have done, or can now do, but what I feel myself able and born to do, that makes me seem so selfishly stupid. Your sentence, thrown back to me for re-consideration, would certainly seem strange to anybody but myself; but the thought that I had so written to you only made me the more resolute in my actions, and the wilder in my visions. What if I sent the same sentence back to you again, with the quiet, stern answer that it is my intention to be the 'first poet of my own age, and second only to a very few of any age.' Would you think me 'mad,' 'drunk,' or an 'idiot'; or my 'self-confidence' one of the '*saddest* paroxysms'? When my biography falls to be written, will not this same 'self-confidence' be one of the most striking features of my intellectual development? Might not a 'poet of twenty' *feel* great things? In all the stories of mental warfare that I have ever read, that mind which became of celestial clearness and godlike power, did nothing for twenty years but *feel*. And I am so accustomed to compare my own mental

progress with that of such men as Shakspeare, Goethe, and Wordsworth, (examples of this last proposition) that the dream of my youth will not be fulfilled, if my fame equal not, at least that of the latter of these three." In another letter, written in another mood, he says, "I am ashamed of what I wrote to you before. I was an *actor* then, not myself: for, being bare of all recommendations, I lied with my own conscience, deeming that if I called myself a great man you were bound to believe me." This sudden and unwonted modesty was probably the mere expression of a casual fit of despondency—entirely sincere while it continued, yet not more sincere than the arrogance which it recanted, and which, as the master impulse of his being, was certain to reassert its supremacy. However this might be, Mr. Dobell appears to have become favourably impressed by the fearless candour of the young enthusiast, as I find him writing to Gray, who had been talking of going to Edinburgh, penniless, to try his fortune: "The tone of your last letter is, to me, a better evidence that you are born to do something noble than any number of confident oracles, or any flatulent 'consciousness of power' that ever distended the figure of dyspeptic youth: nay, even than any *genuine* 'consciousness of power' that is sufficiently objective and shapely to be seen, known, and named by its owner. I think so highly of that letter as a diagnostic, that if you carry out your intention of going to Edinburgh, it will much gratify me if you will accept one or two

notes of introduction to friends of mine there, whose good opinion, if you win it, may be of use to you. . . . Let me know how things fare with you, and be sure of the increased interest and good will—which I hope that farther knowledge may ripen into friendship—of yours faithfully, Sydney Dobell.”

When relieved from his duties as a teacher in Glasgow, young Gray—now engaged on a play after the model of Shakspeare, anon upon a descriptive poem after a manner of his own, and filling up every interval of time with a correspondence as voluminous as that conducted by a Minister of State—must have been both an enigma and an annoyance to the humble household at Merkland. A genius in the family, dreaming insane dreams, and earning no bread—a Pegasus spurning his harness, and doing no honest drudgery—is apt, among persons whose choice lies between famine and toil, to inspire other feelings than those of admiration and pride. Accordingly, every day that elapsed increased his feverish anxiety to do something practical—to achieve something great—to unlock, with the golden key of his genius, some honourable door to preferment. At one time he talked of starting a school in conjunction with his friend Sutherland; but the project was fiercely against the grain, and came to nothing. Some of his Glasgow friends recommended him to look out for a situation in connection with the newspaper press, but none offered. Meanwhile, the idea of bursting like a meteor upon London never seems to have left his mind, and was probably

stimulated at length into action by the fact that Robert W. Buchanan, a young man whose acquaintance he had made in Glasgow, and who was equally fired with the ambition of literary eminence, entertained a similar project. Gray, however, having probably obtained assistance from some of the friends whom he was continually interesting in his behalf, started on his courageous venture alone. In a brief note to his parents, dated Glasgow, 5th May, 1860, he says, "I start off to-night at 5 o'clock by the Edinburgh and Glasgow railway, right on to London, in good health and spirits."

Year after year, what a grave to ambition and high hope must the great metropolis prove to many a sanguine youth! How the "burning and shining light" of the provincial town is apt to become lost in the blaze of its accumulated intellect! What innumerable hearts—hearts that may have felt as if throbbing with celestial fire—must be continually breaking unnoticed and unknown in the midst of its incomparable and delusive splendours! Our youthful adventurer, however, was not without sundry advantages. True, his stock-in-trade consisted only of a mass of unpublished and possibly unsaleable verse; but he had nevertheless most of the qualities calculated to ingratiate him with strangers—an excellent education, a clerkly style of caligraphy, a fervid willingness to work at any congenial task, a person eminently prepossessing, and the blended diffidence and courage significant of simple manners and honest aims. To Dobell he wrote, "I am in

London, and dare not look into the middle of next week. What brought me here? God knows, for I don't. *Alone* in such a place is a horrible thing. I have seen Dr. Mackay, but it's all up. People don't seem to understand me. Westminster Abbey! I was there all day yesterday. If I live I shall be buried there—so help me God! A completely defined consciousness of *great* poetical genius is my only antidote against utter despair and despicable failure." A youth with such an exaggerated notion of his own powers, and so destitute of all prudent reticence on the subject of his conscious capacity for triumph, would probably have fared roughly in the world had he lived into the thick of its battle. Yet was he ever repenting; for, what seems to be his next letter to Dobell begins, "Let me write to you just now without that melodramatic air and tone which seems to haunt me like an evil spirit. Perhaps if you saw me, you would wonder if the quiet, bashful, boyish-looking fellow before you was the writer of all yon blood-and-thunder." Who knows but that, had he lived to a riper age, he might have "reformed it altogether," through the bitterness of that disappointment whose sweet fruit is wisdom, and through the "years that bring the philosophic mind!"

But in the present crisis of his fortunes, Gray needed all his extraordinary gifts of self-sustainment, and there can be no doubt that they served him in good stead. Endowed with a feebleness of purpose and a fainter hope, how could he have flown at such

high game, engaged so much kindly interest, secured so much instant help? Among those whom he found to befriend him were Mr. Dobell's cousin, Miss Coates, of Upper Terrace Lodge, Hampstead, and her friend Miss Marian James, to whose elegant pen English literature is indebted for several charming works of fiction. Of the kindness of these ladies he always spoke in terms of grateful appreciation. But by far the most important interview which he contrived to obtain in London was with Mr. R. Monckton Milnes, M.P. Occupying a place among those who add the grace of letters to the dignity of statesmanship, I can readily imagine that gentleman to be a good deal exposed to the importunities of similar aspirants. To this cause at least I am inclined to attribute the fact that Gray had to make his way through sundry discouragements before reaching the true kernel of his liking. He answered his letters coldly and curtly; and even when he had seen the tall and timid youth, and been favourably impressed with the ability which his poetry manifested, he appears to have disguised, to some extent, the interest which he really felt, lest he should stimulate fatally the vanity which he detected and feared. Writing to his parents Gray says: "I think Monckton Milnes will prove my friend. He says that to be a Scotch minister is the very best thing I could do. 'However, (says he, the last time I saw him,) you can stay a few weeks more in London, and I'll give you £1. per week till you get a situation; but it would

be better for you to go home.' He gave me some MS. to copy—in fact, made something for me to do." On all hands, Gray seems to have been dissuaded from relying on poetry for a subsistence; and the "Luggie" was, I believe, although I find no trace of it in the papers in my hands, rejected in several lofty quarters. But however chagrined by the disparaging remarks of certain critics, he was by no means badly off. Through Dr. Mackay he obtained some work, and he was likewise profitably employed in copying MS. for Lord Elgin's Japanese secretary, whom, in one of his letters, he calls "the frank, generous Mr. Oliphant." But the shadow was about to descend. Incidentally I find him writing home, in a letter still dated May, the month of his departure from Glasgow, "By-the-bye, I have had the worst cold ever I had in my life. I cannot get it away properly: but I feel a great deal better to-day." Writing shortly afterwards he says, "The only thing that bothers me is this cold: it's so heavy on my chest that I can't get it up." From these sentences it is evident that the disease which was ultimately to sap his young life had already begun its ravages. The "beginning of the end" had come.

Gray was at length completely prostrated with illness. In his loneliness, he became, I believe, a fellow-lodger, for a short time, with Buchanan, who had arrived in London about the same time, and who was pushing his way successfully among certain of the metropolitan periodicals. But thanks

to the kindness of his wealthier friends, there was no fear of destitution to aggravate his physical and mental sufferings. The young poet, suddenly struck down in the enthusiasm of his struggles and the pride of his hopes, was a spectacle eminently calculated to touch the large heart of the biographer of Keats. Mr. Milnes bestowed upon him the delicate attentions and charities of a true gentleman—providing for him the best medical advice together with practical aid of every kind; and, considerate of the home-sickness which usually accompanies ill-health in a strange place, had him carefully sent back to Merkland, which, however humble, was his home, and therefore richer in comfort for him at that moment than any other spot in the world.

Fancy our poetic dreamer once more under his father's roof, with all his schemes frustrated, and with his mind full of bewildering recollections of the new spheres of life, of which he had caught only a brief, dazzling glimpse! Scarcely a doubt could exist as to the mortal character of his ailment. He was, however, attended by a competent local physician, Dr. Stewart, of Kirkintilloch; and, through varying moods of confirmed invalidism, he wrought hopefully at his poems, and endeavoured to interest all and sundry in their publication. Besides Dr. Stewart, he was at length visited, at the instance of Mr. Dobell, by Dr. Drummond of Glasgow. The latter took a serious, and indeed most emphatic and active view of his case; and adding to his keen professional zeal a friendly personal interest in the

sufferer, originated a movement to get him conveyed to a southern climate. He himself—young, ambitious, clinging wildly to life—became eager for a sea-voyage, and a residence under warmer skies, as his only hope; and, with this view, kept up a continual and half-frantic correspondence with his various friends. But the idea of a voyage south met, on the whole, with little encouragement. Mr. Milnes wrote: “The remedy derived from climate is of the most uncertain and capricious character, and, in many cases, the absence of affectionate care, and the sense of loneliness which succeeds the yearning for the unknown, so despairing, that I would never take on myself to advise any friend to go away. The treatment, too, of the disease is now made less dependent on warmth of atmosphere than it used to be, and the cases of recovery are much more frequent. I know how easy a thing it is to give counsel, and how poor is consolation; but still I must expect you to be brave and resigned, and to feel that, above being a Poet, is the power of being a Man. There is much in this world far sadder and crueller than the thought of leaving it; and the old Greeks counted every man happy who died young.” In a less decisive, but still similar tone, wrote Mr. Oliphant, with whom he appears to have been desirous of proceeding, in some useful capacity, to Japan. He shewed anxiety to aid him in his views if the doctor considered a long voyage imperative. From the difficulties, however, which he suggested, his tone was undoubtedly dissuasive;

and, taking all things into consideration, he added, "If there is any chance of your health standing the English climate I would recommend your remaining." Surely we cannot say that sympathy was denied him, after reading the following sentences from Dobell: "I shall say nothing of what I feel (for I am no hand at words in such cases) except that there were some tears on my face after reading your letter. Not for sorrow exactly—sorrow never makes me 'cry'—but for 'the pity of it, the pity of it, Iago!' Well, if matters are as you say—which, however, I will not wholly believe till the good physician whom I have asked to examine your chest reports it hopeless—we must accept them as we best can, you know, and see what is to be done under the inevitable conditions. And before looking in those transmortal directions to which good folks usually seem to think it imperative to turn their dying eyes—forgetting that the long sweet habit of earthly perception is not to be unlearned in a day—let us try what we can do on this side the eternal threshold." Every one, however, seemed to shrink from the responsibility of setting the young invalid forth upon a long sea-voyage alone. The next alternative, then, suggested and urged by Dr. Drummond, was that he should pass the winter in the south of England. The doctor recommended Brompton Hospital: Mr. Milnes Torquay in Devonshire.

As a specimen of the kind of letters which Gray wrote at this time, I subjoin one to myself, dated November 21, 1860:—

"I write you in a certain commotion of mind, and may speak wrongly. But I write to *you* because I know that it will take much to offend you when no offence is meant: and when the probable offence will proceed from youthful heat and frantic foolishness. It may be impertinent to address you, of whom I know so little, and yet so much; but the severe circumstances *seem* to justify it.

"The medical verdict pronounced upon me is *certain and rapid death if I remain at Merkland*. That is awful enough even to a brave man. But there is a chance of escape: as a drowning man grasps at a straw I strive for it. Good, kind, true Dobell writes me this morning the plans for my welfare which he has put in progress, and which most certainly meet my wishes. They are as follows: Go *immediately*, and *as a guest*, to the house of Dr. Lane, in the salubrious town of Richmond: thence, when the difficult matter of admission is overcome, to the celebrated Brompton Hospital for chest diseases; and in the spring to Italy. Of course, all this presupposes the conjectural problem that I will slowly recover. 'Consummation devoutly to be wished!' Now, you think, or say, what prevents you from taking advantage of all these plans? At once, and without any squeamishness, *money for an outfit*. I did not like to ask Dobell, nor do I ask you; but hearing a 'subscription' had been *spoken of*, I urge it with all my weak force. I am not in want of an immense sum, but say £12. or £15. This would conduce to my safety as far as human means could do so. If you can aid me in getting this sum, the obligation to a sinking fellow-creature will be as indelible in his heart as the moral law.

"I hope you will not misunderstand me. My barefaced request may be summed thus: If your influence set the affair a-going, quietly and *quickly*, the thing is done, and I am off. Surely I am worth £15. And for God's sake overlook the strangeness, and the freedom, and the utter impertinence of this communication. I would be off for Richmond in two days, had I the money: and sitting here thinking of the fearful probabilities makes me half-mad."

Helpless himself, the death-stricken invalid could only thus appeal for help with the strength which is the prerogative of weakness; and he found it in more than one quarter. Mr. Milnes, the kind-hearted ladies at Hampstead, and other English friends, were ready to lend whatever little assistance might be needed; while, among the benevolent persons in Scotland whom Mr. Dobell had moved in his behalf, was the excellent Mrs. Nichol, widow of the late Dr. Nichol, Professor of Astronomy in the University of Glasgow. The latter resided in Edinburgh; but through Mr. William Logan of Glasgow, she communicated to poor Gray all kinds of sympathy and aid. Mr. Logan, formerly, and for many years, connected with the City Mission, is by nature a philanthropist. He became a frequent visitor at Merkland, and the chief medium of communication with most of the dying poet's influential friends. A little money which had been offered through him with a view to gratify his ardent wish of seeing his poems in print, was now made available for the more urgent purpose of conveying him south; and Mr. Logan, having aided his parents in the necessary preparations, and provided for his kindly reception immediately on the arrival of the train in London, saw him, towards the end of the year, tenderly and safely away—a fragile fugitive from the rigours of the northern winter, with a good deal of hope in his heart, and a moderate sum of money in his pocket.

Alas! the forlorn traveller carried with him one

fatal, one inevitable, one desperately-clinging and remorseless companion, in the shape of that disease which is evermore paling the cheek of beauty and blighting the aspirations of youth. Dr. Lane, at his celebrated hydropathic establishment, Sudbrook Park, Richmond, treated him with conspicuous kindness; but his health did not improve. His cough "was no better," and he feared that the sudden removal of the cod-liver oil "was beginning to tell on his appearance." Writing to his parents, he says: "I believe, after all, that there's no place like home; but however sweet and pleasant and refreshing the idea of it is now, and will be ever, I will not come north, as long as I am able to remain south. Kindness, and comfort, and change of air, and so forth, are all very well. Yet is something awanting: that inexpressible tenderness in trifles which enriches existence and makes it bearable. Life is *thrust* upon us: men wish it not. This wide universe is an enigma and a mystery. Death alone can unriddle it. *Let it come*. You see I am a little home-sick, like the boy when he goes to school. I would not have been home-sick had I remained well; but whenever I get sick, and weary, and weak, as I am now, I can't help displaying a little of the woman." In the same letter he says: "There is no notice yet of a removal hence. I am dreadfully afraid of Brompton: living among sallow, dolorous, dying consumptives, is enough to kill me. If I am put into a room with four coughing, weak, nerveless patients, how do you think I'm to bear it? Here

I'm as comfortable as can be: a fire in my room all day, plenty of meat, and good society—nobody so ill as myself: but there, perhaps hundreds far worse (the hospital holds 218 in all stages of the disease—90 of them died last report), dying beside me perhaps—it frightens me.” Miss Coates had subscribed to Brompton Hospital for the express purpose of procuring his admission. But either no vacancy occurred, or he shrunk from it. Mr. Milnes thereupon sent him to Devonshire, under arrangements calculated to ensure for him as large a measure as possible of affectionate attention and care. The sight of the Sanatorium at Torquay, however, appears to have had an extraordinary effect upon his nervous system. His cry became “home, home!” and to the amazement of his northern friends, he presented himself abruptly at Merkland.

It was now the middle of January, 1861, the opening of the year of which he was never to see the end. To Freeland he wrote: “Of course you know that I am home—having wildly (and perhaps unwisely) broken through all the plans and good intentions of my friends. But the sight of the Consumptive Hospital, and the folk in it, put me into a severe nervous fever, and nothing would satisfy me but *home*. When you come out (and come soon), I will recount to you my miseries and misfortunes. If I don't either get better or worse quickly, my mind will become diseased.” Sending one of his pieces, written “In the Shadows,” he says: “I wrote the enclosed since I came back, the first verses

I have written for eight months. Not one line pleases me: when I read Thomson I despair..... When you come, bring books—of any kind, if I have not read them. Books, books, books—I have none.” Indeed, as he did not seem to suffer from his journey, but, on the contrary, gave evidence of revived literary energy, his friends were hopeful of an increase of physical strength which the opening up of a milder season would confirm. Mr. Milnes wrote to him on January 19: “Of course I am sorry at the failure of the Torquay venture, but you have shewn so much vivacity in getting free from it, that I trust you have more life in you than was supposed, and that I may yet receive many letters from you. I knew the conditions of hospital life would be painful and embarrassing to you; but I hoped that the medical advice, the climate, and the scenery would have proved compensations. Had my friends arrived at Torquay in time to look after you, they might have devised some other plan, but it is not for one in health and comfort to analyse the feelings of one in your position.” Something, however, had been attempted—perhaps the best had been done—and, at all events, the suffering youth had received a lesson in contentment. Nor had that lesson, as far as could be judged, been ineffectual, for he appeared to recognise in the toil-supported abode at Merkland, a comfort sweeter and dearer than the luxury of gilded saloons.

Day after day—week after week—month after month—life was now ebbing—ebbing away from

him for ever. One day—I have no clue to the date beyond the word “Monday”—a memory must have recurred to him of a boyish companionship, a memory of one to whom, in gladder days, he had talked of being “ready for adventures,” and addressing his “dear, dear, true Sutherland,” he wrote:—

“As my time narrows to a completion, you grow dearer. I think of you daily with quiet tears. I think of the happy, happy days we might have spent together at Maryburgh; but the vision darkens. My crown is laid in the dust for ever. Nameless too! God, how that troubles me! Had I but written one immortal poem, what a glorious consolation! But this shall be my epitaph if I have a gravestone at all,—

“*’Twas not a life,*

’Twas but a piece of childhood thrown away.’

O dear, dear Sutherland! I wish I could spend two *healthy* months with you: we would make an effort, and do something great. But slowly, insidiously, and I fear fatally, consumption is doing its work, until I shall be only a fair odorous memory (for I have great faith in your affection for me) to you—a sad tale for your old age.

“*Whom the gods love, die young.*”

Bless the ancient Greeks for that comfort. If I was not ripe, do you think I would be gathered?

“Work for fame for my sake, dear Sutherland. Who knows but in spiritual being I may send sweet dreams to you—to advise, comfort, and command! who knows? At all events, when I am *mooly*, may you be fresh as the dawn.

“Yours till death, and I trust *hereafter too*,

“DAVID GRAY.”

Even under this strong and touching consciousness of an early doom—with the dart of death, like the sword of Damocles, continually suspended over

him and visible—Gray continued to weave, in glory if not in joy, his poetic fancies. Down, indeed, to the very edge of the grave, he contrived to plant those flowers of poesy which he trusted would bloom over him when he was dead. His beautiful dying sonnets were all written when his shattered frame only showed more clearly the burning of the internal fire. In the month of May he wrote to Freeland: “I feel more acutely the approach of that mystic dissolution of existence. The body is unable to perform its functions, and like rusty machinery creaks painfully to the final crash. I cannot write; my head aches, and my hand trembles; yet I must make an effort. About my poem—it troubles me like an infernal ever-present demon. Some day I’ll burn all I have ever written—yet no! They are all that remain of *me* as a living soul. Milnes offers £5 towards its publication. I shall have it ready for you by Saturday first. You must ask Hedderwick if he will read it; and perhaps Sheriff Bell and other Glasgow critics would look at it. Do I dream?” To Freeland likewise, who was one of his most regular and welcome visitors, he had scrawled out a high-flown dedication ending with these words: “Before I enter that nebulous uncertain land of shadowy notions and tremulous wonderings—standing on the threshold of the sun and looking back—I cry thee, O Beloved! a last farewell, lingeringly, passionately, without tears.”

Although seeing much to admire in the poem of “The Luggie,” I hesitated to guarantee it such

a reception as would render its publication profitable. Some other opinions which were obtained in Glasgow were more adverse. Moreover, circumstances prevented me, at the time, from taking any active initiative. Delay after delay occurred; but there was no delay on the part of the insidious foe with which the young poet contended. September came, and he wrote despairingly to Logan: "If my book be not *immediately* gone on with, I fear I may never see it. Disease presses closely on me. Reasons innumerable I could urge for the lawful sweetness of my desire, but your goodness will suggest them The merit of my mss. is very little—mere hints of better things—crude notions harshly languaged: but that must be overlooked. They are left not to the world (wild thought!) but as the simple possible sad only legacy I can leave to those who have loved and love me."

It was a hard task to resist such appeals. Nor were they wholly resisted. There was much discussion, and even some movement, but the matter hung fire. Glasgow was a bad field for the publication of poetry. The result to the emaciated and feeble author might be failure and disappointment, hastening the inexorable change. November with its gloom arrived, and Gray, obviously feeling his end very near, made a final appeal to Mr. Dobell—the staunch friend whom he had never seen, and was destined never to see. "Surely," he wrote, "he to whom the poem—the old, incomplete, despised, beloved poem—is dedicated, shall read it. Dear Mr.

Dobell, will you read 'The Luggie,' and see whether or not it is worthy of your favour or acceptance? I have inscribed it to you, after the ancient manner of Thomson. God knows it is not much; but, as I said to you a year ago, *it is all I have.*" The tender bribe of the dedication was modestly declined for reasons deemed satisfactory, but with the aid of his lady friends at Hampstead, and the ready co-operation of Mr. Macmillan, publisher, Cambridge, the poem was, without loss of time, put into the hands of the printer. By a fortunate accident, a specimen page beginning, "How beautiful!" reached Merkland on the very day preceding his death. It was accompanied by the following note from the accomplished hand of the authoress of "Ethel:"—

"Upper-terrace Lodge, Nov. 29.

"My dear Mr. Gray,—I have heard from Mr. Macmillan this morning. He says the MS. will form a volume like 'Edwin of Deira;' and the enclosed is a specimen page sent, with the printer's estimate. I cannot resist the impulse to send it on to you, because I think it will give you so much pleasure to see even this small portion of your work already in the form in which I hope before long we may see it published. After Mr. Dobell's praise of your poetry, you will hardly care for mine; yet I will say briefly that those sonnets which I found time to read before sending off the MS. to Cambridge, impressed me deeply with their truth, and beauty, and rare excellence and simplicity of pathos. It seems to me, too, that in your poetry, even the most mournful, there is a shining forth of that hopeful, loving faith in God's love, which it is indeed a good thing for poets to teach, and which I earnestly trust is the abiding solace and rest of your own

spirit. I can only write these few lines now ; but believe that I am always, with much sympathy, sincerely your friend,

“ MARIAN JAMES.”

As he gazed upon the neatly-printed page, he seemed to feel that the dream of his life was about to be fulfilled. He read its clear type as if by the reflection of a light caught from the spiritual world. That it was “good news,” he said ; that he might now subside tranquilly—“without tears”—into his eternal rest, he probably felt. Next day, the 3rd of December, 1861, the shadow of utter blackness came down upon the humble household at Merkland, blinding all eyes. David Gray was no more. His spirit had been borne gently away on the wings of the strong and beautiful promises breathed from the Book of Life—almost his last words being, “God has love, and I have faith.” He was in his twenty-fourth year. Among his papers the following memorial was found, written in his own clear hand :—

MY EPITAPH.

Below lies one whose name was traced in sand—
He died not knowing what it was to live :
Died while the first sweet consciousness of manhood
And maiden thought electrified his soul :
Faint beatings in the calyx of the rose.
Bewildered reader, pass without a sigh
In a proud sorrow ! There is life with God,
In other kingdom of a sweeter air :
In Eden every flower is blown : Amen.

DAVID GRAY.

Sept. 27, 1861.

Whether these lines will yet be inscribed on any stone, I know not. At all events, it will not be among the congregated tombs of the great ones of all time. Westminster Abbey was not for him. If, in any possible future, there arose before him a vision of its solemn arches, its silent yet eloquent sculptures, and its groups of pilgrim worshippers, it was only at the end of a term of years which he was fated never to reach. But not the less peacefully will his spirit rest in the near neighbourhood of that home from which his affections were never weaned, and of that stream whose low murmur he laboured, through years of passionate yearning, to exalt into an eternal melody. Not far from Merkland, on an elevation a short distance from the highway, there is situated a lonely place of sepulture, surrounded by a low rude wall of stone, with a little watch-tower over the entrance-gate, useful for shelter and observation during nights, long since bygone, when graveyards were broken into and plundered, but now occupied with the few implements necessary for the performance of the last mortal rites. It has neither church nor house attached, and is known as the "Auld Aisle Burying-ground." With the poet it had been a favourite place of resort and meditation. He could see from it the Luggie, the Bothlin burn, the Woodilee farm, all the localities which he most loved. There, as appeared from the dates on the grave-stones, had the bones of his ancestors reposed for above two hundred years; and thither, on the Saturday after

his death, were his own remains carried—on handspokes, after the old Scotch fashion—followed by about thirty mourners. The wintry day had been lowering, but the hour of the funeral was brightened with gleams of clear sunshine, and in the midst of many regrets, yet of some soothings, all that was mortal of David Gray was laid deep in the mould, near a solitary ash-tree—the only tree in the place—now bare and disconsolate, but ere long to break into foliage, and be an aviary for the songs of summer.

In person, the deceased poet was tall, with a slight stoop. His head was not large, but his temperament was of the keenest and brightest edge. With black curling hair, eyes dark, large, and lustrous, and a complexion of almost feminine delicacy, his appearance never failed to make a favourable impression on strangers. Yet with some of his fastest friends—such as Dobell and Mrs. Nichol—he never became personally acquainted. That he was gifted with poetic genius there is enough, I think, in his brief life-story, apart altogether from his lyrical achievements, to prove. No mere flash of vanity could so have shaped itself into the nimbus of a genuine inspiration. What further evidence of supreme endowment he might have furnished to the world had he lived, we can only of course guess. Morally, he was, as far as I can discover, singularly pure, and worthy of the kindly interest which he awakened in so many quarters. One overmastering passion—an ever-burning desire for fame—had ap-

parently swallowed up every other in his bosom. The simple love of poetry he may have been too apt to interpret as the essential and celestial gift. He may have been too apt to mistake the whisperings of ambition and conceit for the authentic oracles of prophecy. But, on the other hand, is not a strong, irrepressible, deeply-inherent impulse but the quickening, in many cases, of veritable power? At all events, looking at the superlative struggle of this son of a Scotch handloom weaver, and at its sad, unsatisfied end, generous readers—and readers who are not generous can never be wholly just—will recognise in him a spirit freeing itself, at the very outset of life, from all grovelling contagion, shaping forth its own magnificent destiny, and pursuing its divine ideal with the steadfastness of an angelic will. How far his posthumous writings may win for him the laurels for which, through every accident of fortune, he incessantly sighed and toiled, I hesitate to predict. Inasmuch, however, as there are many who knew and loved him, and will dwell often and fondly on his pages—the unfinished columns of a temple suddenly arrested in the building—the words of the mighty master may be fairly, not foolishly or falsely applied:

“Death makes no conquest of this conqueror;
For now he lives in Fame, though not in life.”

J. H.

THE LUGGIE.



THE LUGGIE.

THAT impulse which all beauty gives the soul
Is languaged as I sing. For fairer stream
Rolled never golden sand unto the sea,
Made sweeter music than the Luggie, gloom'd
By glens whose melody mingles with her own.
The uttered name my inmost being thrills,
A word beyond a charm; and if this lay
Could smoothly flow along and wind to the end
In natural manner, as the Luggie winds
Her tortuous waters, then the world would list
In sweet enthrallment, swallowed up and lost,
As he who hears the music that beguiles.
For as the pilgrim on warm summer days
Pacing the dusty highway, when he sees
The limpid silver glide with liquid lapse

Between the emerald banks—with inward thro-
Blesses the clear enticement and partakes :
(His hot face meeting its own counterpart
Shadowy, from an unvoyageable sky);
So would the people in these later days
Listen the singing of a country song,
A virelay of harmless homeliness;
These later days, when in most bookish rhymes
Dear blessed Nature is forgot, and lost
Her simple unelaborate modesty.

And unto thee, my friend! thou prime of soul
'Mong men; I gladly bring my first-born song!
Would it were worthier for thy noble sake,
True poet and true English gentleman!
Thy favours flattered me, thy praise inspired :
Thy utter kindness took my heart, and now
Thy love alleviates my slow decline.
Beneath an ash in beauty tender leaved,

And thro' whose boughs the glimmering sunshine
flow'd

In rare ethereal jasper, making cool
A chequered shadow in the dark-green grass,
I lay enchanted. At my head there bloomed
A hedge of sweet-briar, fragrant as the breath,
Of maid belov'd when her cheek is laid
To yours in downy pressure, soft as sleep.
A bank of harebells, flowers unspeakable
For half-transparent azure, nodding, gleamed
As a faint zephyr, laden with perfume,
Kissed them to motion, gently, with no will.
Before me streams most dear unto my heart,
Sweet Luggie, sylvan Bothlin—fairer twain
Than ever sung themselves into the sea,
Lucid Ægean, gemmed with sacred isles—
Were rolled together in an emerald vale;
And into the severe bright noon, the smoke
In airy circles o'er the sycamores

Upcurled—a lonely little cloud of blue
Above the happy hamlet. Far away,
A gently-rising hill with umbrage clad,
Hazel and glossy birch and silver fir,
Met the keen sky. Oh, in that wood, I know,
The woodruff and the hyacinth are fair
In their own season; with the bilberry
Of dim and misty blue, to childhood dear.
Here, on a sunny August afternoon,
A vision stirred my spirit half-awake
To fling a purer lustre on those fields
That knew my boyish footsteps; and to sing
Thy pastoral beauty, Luggie, into fame.
Now, while the nights are long, by the dear hearth
Of home I write; and ere the mavis trills
His smooth notes from the budding boughs of March,
While the red windy morning o'er the east
Widens, or while the lowly sky of eve
Burns like a topaz;—all the dear design

May reach completion, married to my song
As far as words can syllable desire.

May yet the inspiration and delight
That proved my soul on that Autumnal day,
Be with me now, while o'er the naked earth
Hushfully falls the soft, white, windless snow!

Once more, O God, once more before I die,
Before blind darkness and the wormy grave
Contain me, and my memory fades away
Like a sweet-coloured evening, slowly, sad—
Once more, O God, thy wonders take my soul.
A winter day! the feather-silent snow
Thickens the air with strange delight, and lays
A fairy carpet on the barren lea.
No sun, yet all around that inward light
Which is in purity,—a soft moonshine,
The silvery dimness of a happy dream.

How beautiful! afar on moorland ways,
Bosomed by mountains, darkened by huge glens,
(Where the lone altar raised by Druid hands
Stands like a mournful phantom), hidden clouds
Let fall soft beauty, till each green fir branch
Is plumed and tassel'd, till each heather stalk
Is delicately fringed. The sycamores,
Thro' all their mystical entanglement
Of boughs, are draped with silver. All the green
Of sweet leaves playing with the subtle air
In dainty murmuring; the obstinate drone
Of limber bees that in the monkshood bells
House diligent; the imperishable glow
Of summer sunshine never more confessed
The harmony of nature, the divine
Diffusive spirit of the Beautiful.
Out in the snowy dimness, half revealed
Like ghosts in glimpsing moonshine, wildly run
The children in bewildering delight.

There is a living glory in the air—
A glory in the hush'd air, in the soul
A palpitating wonder hush'd in awe.

Softly—with delicate softness—as the light
Quickens in the undawned east; and silently—
With definite silence—as the stealing dawn
Dapples the floating clouds, slow fall, slow fall,
With indecisive motion eddying down,
The white-winged flakes—calm as the sleep of sound,
Dim as a dream. The silver-misted air
Shines with mild radiance, as when thro' a cloud
Of semi-lucent vapour shines the moon.
I saw last evening, (when the ruddy sun,
Enlarged and strange, sank low and visibly,
Spreading fierce orange o'er the west), a scene
Of winter in his milder mood. Green fields,
Which no kine cropped, lay damp; and naked trees
Threw skeleton shadows. Hedges, thickly grown,

Twined into compact firmness with no leaves,
Trembled in jewelled fretwork as the sun
To lustre touched the tremulous waterdrops.
Alone, nor whistling as his fellows do
In fabling poem and provincial song,
The ploughboy shouted to his reeking team;
And at the clamour, from a neighbouring field
Arose, with whirr of wings, a flock of rooks
More clamorous; and thro' the frosted air,
Blown wildly here and there without a law,
They flew, low-grumbling out loquacious croaks.
Red sunset brightened all things; streams ran red
Yet coldly; and before the unwholesome east,
Searching the bones and breathing ice, blew down
The hill with a dry whistle, by the fire
In chamber twilight rested I at home.

But now what revelation of fair change,
O Giver of the seasons and the days!

Creator of all elements, pale mists,
Invisible great winds and exact frost!
How shall I speak the wonder of thy snow?
What though we know its essence and its birth,
Can quick expound in philosophic wise,
The how, and whence, and manner of its fall;
Yet, oh, the inner beauty and the life—
The life that is in snow! The virgin-soft
And utter purity of the down-flake
Falling upon its fellow with no sound!
Unblown by vulgar winds, innumerable flakes
Fall gently, with the gentleness of love!
Between its spotless-clothed banks, in clear
Pellucid luculence, the Luggie seems
Charmed in its course, and with deceptive calm
Flows mazily in unapparent lapse,
A liquid silence. Every field is robed,
And in the furrow lies the plough unused.
The earth is cherished, for beneath the soft

Pure uniformity, is gently born
Warmth and rich mildness fitting the dead roots
For the resuscitation of the spring.

Now while I write, the wonder clothes the vale,
Calmed every wind and loaded every grove;
And looking thro' the implicated boughs
I see a gleaming radiance. Sparkling snow
Refined by morning-footed frost so still
Mantles each bough; and such a windless hush
Breathes thro' the air, it seems the fairy glen
About some phantom palace, pale abode
Of fabled *Sleeping Beauty*. Songless birds
Flit restlessly about the breathless wood,
Waiting the sudden breaking of the charm;
And as they quickly spring on nimble wing
From the white twig, a sparkling shower falls
Starlike. It is not whiteness, but a clear
Outshining of all purity, which takes

The winking eyes with such a silvery gleam.
No sunshine, and the sky is all one cloud.
The vale seems lonely, ghostlike; while aloud
The housewife's voice is heard with doubled sound.
I have not words to speak the perfect show;
The ravishment of beauty; the delight
Of silent purity; the sanctity
Of inspiration which o'erflows the world,
Making it breathless with divinity.
God makes His angels spirits—that is, winds—
His ministers a flaming fire. So, heart!
(Weak heart that fainted in thy loneliness)
In the sweet breezes spirits are alive;
God's angels guide the thunder-clouds; and God
Speaks in the thunder truly. All around
Is loving and continuous deity;
His mercy over all His works remains.
And surely in the glossy snow there shines
Angelic influence—a ministry

Devout and heavenly, that with benign
Action, amid a wondrous hush lets fall
The dazzling garment on the fostered fields.

So thus with fair delapsion softly falls
The sacred shower; and when the shortened day
Dejected dies in the low streaky west,
The rimy moon displays a cold blue night,
And keen as steel the east wind sprinkles ice.
Thicker than bees, about the waxing moon
Gather the punctual stars. Huge whitened hills
Rise glimmering to the blue verge of the night,
Ghostlike, and striped with narrow glens of firs
Black-waving, solemn. O'er the Luggie stream
Gathers a veiny film of ice, and creeps
With elfin feet around each stone and reed,
Working fine masonry; while o'er the dam
Dashing, a noise of waters fills the clear
And nitrous air. All the dark wintry hours

Sharply the winds from the white level moors
Keen whistle. Timorous in homely bed
The schoolboy listens, fearful lest gaunt wolves
Or beasts, whose uncouth forms in ancient books
He has beheld, at creaking shutters pull
Howling. And when at last the languid dawn
In windy redness re-illumes the east
With ineffectual fire, an intense blue
Severely vivid o'er the snowy hills
Gleams chill, while hazy half-transparent clouds
Slow-range the freezing ether of the west.
Along the woods the keenly vehement blasts
Wail, and disrobe the mantled boughs, and fling
A snow-dust everywhere. Thus wears the day:
While grandfather over the well-watched fire
Hangs cowering, with a cold drop at his nose.

Now underneath the ice the Luggie growls,
And to the polished smoothness curlers come

Rudely ambitious. Then for happy hours
The clinking stones are slid from wary hands,
And *Barleycorn*, best wine for surly airs,
Bites i' th' mouth, and ancient jokes are crack'd.
And oh, the journey homeward, when the sun,
Low-rounding to the west, in ruddy glow
Sinks large, and all the amber-skirted clouds,
His flaming retinue, with dark'ning glow
Diverge! The broom is brandished as the sign
Of conquest, and impetuously they boast
Of how this shot was played—with what a bend
Peculiar—the perfection of all art—
That stone came rolling grandly to the *Tee*
With victory crown'd, and flinging wide the rest
In lordly crash! Within the village inn,
What time the stars are sown in ether keen,
Clear and acute with brightness; and the moon
Sharpen's her semicircle; and the air
With bleakly shivering sough cuts like a scythe,

They by the roaring chimney sit, and quaff
The beaded '*Usqueba*' with sugar dash'd.
Oh when the precious liquid fires the brain
To joy, and every heart beats fast with mirth
And ancient fellowship, what nervy grasps
Of horny hands o'er tables of rough oak!
What singing of *Lang Syne* till teardrops shine,
And friendships brighten as the evening wanes!

Now the dead earth, wrapt solemnly, expects
The punctual resurrection of the Spring.
Shackled and bound, the coldly vigilant frost
Stiffens all rivers, and with eager power
Hardens each glebe. The wasted country owns
The keen despotic vehemence of the North;
And with the resignation that obtains
Where he is weak and powerless, man awaits,
Under God's mercy, the dissolvent thaw.

O All-beholding, All-informing God
Invisible, and ONLY through effects
Known and belov'd, unshackle the waste earth!
Soul of the incomplete vitality
In atom and in man! Soul of all Worlds!
Leave not Thy glory vacant, nor afflict
With fear and hunger, man whom Thou hast made.
Thou from Thy chambers waterest the earth;
Thou givest snow like wool; and scatterest wide
Hoarfrost like ashes. Casting forth Thy ice
Like morsels, who can stand before Thy cold?
Thou sendest forth Thy word, and lo! they melt;
Causing Thy wind to blow, the waters flow.*

Soon the frozen air receives the subtle thaw:
And suddenly a crawling mist, with rain
Impregn'd, the damp day dims, and drizzling drops
Proclaim a change. At night across the heavens

* Psalm cxlvii. 16—18.

Swift-journeying, and by a furious wind
Squadron'd, the hurrying clouds range the roused sky,
Magnificently sombrous. The wan moon
Amazed, gleams often through a cloudy rack,
Then shuddering, hides. One earnest wakeful star
Of living sapphire drooping by her side,
A faithful spirit in her lone despair,
Outshines the cloudy tempest. Then the shower
Falls ceaseless, and night murmurs with the rain.
And in the sounding morning what a change!
The meadows shine new-washed; while here and
there

A dusky patch of snow in shelter'd paths
Melts lonely. The awakened forest waves
With boughs unplumed. The white investiture
Of the fair earth hath vanished, and the hills
That in the evening sunset glowed with rose
And ineffectual baptism of gold,
Shine tawdry, crawled upon by the blind rain.

Now Luggie thunders down the ringing vale,
Tawnily brown, wide-leaving yellow sand
Upon the meadow. The South-West, aroused,
Blustering in moody kindness clears the sky
To its blue depths by a full-winged wind,
Blowing the diapason of red March.

Blow high and cleanse the sky, O South-West wind !
Roll the full clouds obedient; overthrow
White crags of vapour in confusion piled
Precipitate, high-toppling undissolved :
And while with silent workings they are spread
And scattered, broken into ruinous pomp
By Thy invisible influence, what calm
And sweet disclosure of the upper deep
Cerulean, the atmospheric sea !
Blow high and sift the earth, thou South-West wind !
Now the dull air grows rarer, and no more
The stark day thickens towards evenfall ;

Nor from the solid cloud-gloom drips the rain :
But in a sunset mild and beautiful
The day sinks, till in clear dilucid air,
As in a chamber newly decorate,
The golden Phoebe reddens with the wind.
No more through hoary mists and low-hung clouds
The eternal hills—bones of the earth—upheave
Their deity for worship : but severe
Against the clear sky outlined, each sharp crag
Uplifts its scarred magnificence to Heaven.
From breezy ledge the eagle springs aloft,
And beating boldly up against the wind,
With inconceivable velocity
Stretches to upper ether, and renews
Haughty communion with the regal sun !
Blow high, O deep-mouth'd wind from the South-
West !

And in the caves and hollows of the rocks
Moan mournfully, for desolation reigns.

Through the unknown abysses and foul chasms,
Sacred to horror and eternal damps
And darkness ever-cumbent, blindly howl
Till the hoarse dragons, wailing in their woe
Infernal, answer from accursed dens.

Pleasant to him who long in sick-room pent,
Surveying still the same unchanging hills
Belted with vapour, muffled up in cloud;
The same raw landscape soaked in ceaseless rain;
Pleasant to him the invigorating wind.
Roused from reclusive thought by the deep sound
And motion of the forest (as a steed
When shrills the silver trumpet of the onset),
He rushes to communion with old forms.
Like a fair picture suddenly uncovered
To an impatient artist, the fair earth,
Touched with the primal glory of the Spring,
Flings an indefinite glamour on his soul.

With indistinct commotion he perceives
All things, and his delight is indistinct.
Earth's forms and ever-living beauty strike
Amazement through his spirit, till he feels
As one new-born to being undeflowered.
The sudden music from the budding woods,
The lark in air, startles and overjoys.
O Laverock! (for thy Scottish name to me
Sounds sweetest) with unutterable love
I love thee: for each morning, as I lie
Relaxed and weary with my long disease,
One from low grass arises visibly
And sings as if it sang for me alone.
Among a thousand I could tell the tones
Of this, my little sweet hierophant!
To fainting heart and the despairing soul
What is more soothing than the natural voice
Of birds? One Candlemas many years ago,
When weak with pain and sickness, it infused

Into my soul a bliss delectable.

For suddenly into the misty air

A mellow, smooth and liquid music, clear

As silver, softer than an organ stop

Ere the bass grumbles, rose. The blunted winds

No longer edged severely with keen frost

Forgot to whisper, and a summer-calm

Pervaded soul and sense. No violet

As yet breathed perfume; from the darkling sward

No snowdrop boldly peeped; and even the ash,

Whence flowed the sound, unfolded not her buds

To blacken while the embryo gathered green.

And yet this hardy herald of the Spring

Chaunted rich harmony, daintily carved out

Her voice, and through her sleek throat sobb'd her

soul

In a delicious tremble. As she tuned

Her pliant song, slow from the closing sky

The sacred snow fell calm. Yet through the shower,

Hushing all nature into silence, clear
The *Feltie-flier** trilled her slippery close
In panting rapture, from the whitening ash.
I stood all wonder; and to this late hour
Remember the dear song with ravishment;
Nor ever comes a merry Candlemas day
But I am out to hear. And if perchance
Some warbler sprinkle on the vacant air
Its homeless notes, the bird seems to my heart
The individual bird of comely grey
That sang her pliant strain through falling snow.

Now, when the crumbling glebe is by the wind
Unbound, and snows adown the mountains hoar
Glide liquid, from the furrow loose the plough.
Enyoke the willing horses, and upturn
With deep-pressed share the saponaceous loam.
From morn to even with progression slow

* I am almost certain this name of the bird is merely local, but I know no other.

The ploughboy cuts his awkward parallels,
And soberly imbrowns the decent fields.
It was a hazy February day
Ten years ago, when I, a boy of ten,
Beheld a country ploughing-match. The morn
Lighted the east with a dim smoky flare
Of leaden purple, as the rumbling wains
Each with a plough light-laden (while behind
Trotted a horse sleek-comb'd and tail bedight
With many-coloured ribbons) by our home
Went downwards to the rich fat meadow-grounds
Bounding the Luggie. Many a herd of beeves
Dew-lapp'd had fattened there, and headlong oft
O'er the hoof-clattering turf they wildly ran,
Lashing with swinging tail the thirsty flies.
But now the smooth expanse of level green
Was quickly to be changed to sober brown;
And twenty ploughs by twenty ploughmen held
To cut with shining share the living turf.

Oh many a wintry hour, thro' wind and rain,
In valleys gloom'd, or by the bleak hill-side
Lonely, these twenty had themselves inured
And stubborn'd to perfection. Many a touch
And word of honest kindness had been used
To the dear faithful horses *snooving* on
In quiet patience, jutting noble chests.
Now the big day, expected long, was come:
And, with proud shoulders yoked, conscious they
stood
Patient and unrefusing; while behind,
All ready stripped, brown brawny arms displayed—
Arms sinewed by long labour—eager swains
O'er-leaning slight, with cautious wary hold
The plough detain. At the commencing sign
A simultaneous noise discordant tears
The air thick-closing to a hazy damp.
Sudden the horses move, and the clear yokes,
Well-polished, clatter. With an artful bend

The gleaming coulter takes the grass and cuts
The greenly telled blades with nibbling noise
Almost unheard. The smooth share follows fast;
And from its shining slope the clayey glebe
In neat and neighbouring furrows sidelong falls.
Thus till the dank, raw-cold, and unpurged day
Gathering its rheumy humours threatens rain;
And the bleak night steals up the forlorn east.
And when the careful verdict is preferr'd
By the wise judge (a gray-hair'd husbandman,
Himself in his fresh youth a ploughboy keen),
Some bosoms fire exultant. Others, slow
Their reeking horses harnessed, lag along
Heart-sad and weary; and the rumbling noise
Of homeward-going carts for miles away
Is heard, till night brings silence and repose.

But never with sad motions of the soul,
Despairing, yoked his sleek and smoking team

For homeward journey my belovèd friend !
He the great prize, the guinea all of gold,
Gained thrice and grew a very famous man ;
Till Death, the churl accurs'd, him in his prime
Bore to the border-land of wonder. Then
I felt the blank in life when dies a friend.
Inexplicable emptiness and want
Unsatisfied ! The unrepealable law
Consumed the living while the dead decayed.
No more, no more thro' glorious nights of May
We wander, chasing pleasure as of old.
First night of May ! and the soft-silvered moon
Brightens her semi-circle in the blue ;
And 'mid the tawny orange of the west
Shines the full star that ushers in the even !
On the low meadows by the Luggie-side
Gathers a semi-lucent mist, and creeps
In busy silence, shrouding golden furze
And leavy copsewood. Thro' the tortuous dell

Like an eternal sound the Luggie flows
In unreposing melody. And here,
Three perfect summers gone, my dear first friend
Was with me; and we swore a sudden oath,
To travel half-a-dozen miles and court
Two sisters, whose sweet faces sunshine kissed
To berry brown and country comeliness—
Kiss-worthier than the love of Solomon.
So singing clearly with a merry heart
Old songs—*It was upon a Lammas night*;
And that sweet thing by gentle Tannahil,
Married to music sweeter than itself,
The Lowland Lassie—thro' dew-silvered fields
We hastened 'mid the mist our footsteps raised
Until we reached the moorland. From its bed
Among the purplish heather whirring rose
The plover, wildly screaming; and from glens
Of moaning firs the pheasant's piercing shriek
Discordant sounded. Then, 'mong elder trees

Throwing antique fat shadows, soon we saw
The window panes, moon-whitened; and low heard
Bawtie, the shaggie collie, grumble out
His disapproval in a sullen growl.
But slyly wearing nearer, cried my friend,
“Whisht, Bawtie! Bawtie!” and the fellow came
Whining, and laid a wet nose in his palm
Obedient, while I tinkled on the panes
A fairy summons to the souls within.
The door creaked musically, and a face
Peeped smiling, till I whispered, “Open, Kate!”
And thro’ the moonshine came the low sweet quest—
“Oh! is it you?” My answer was a kiss.
Then entering the kitchen paved with stone,
We kicked the sparkling faggot till it blazed;
And, sitting round it, many a tale of love
Was told, until the chrysolite of dawn
Burned in the east, and from the mountains rolled
The sarcenent mists far-flaming with the morn.

This was my first of May three years ago :
Now in a churchyard by the Bothlin side—
The Auld Aisle—moulders my first friend, and keeps
An early tryste with God, the All in All.

We sat at school together on one seat,
Came home together thro' the lanes, and knew
The dunnoek's nest together in the hedge,
With smooth blue eggs in cosy brightness warm.
And as two youngling kine on cold Spring nights
Lie close together on the bleak hill-side
For mutual heat, so when a trouble came
We crept to one another, growing still
True friends in interchange of heart and soul.
But suddenly death changed his countenance,
And grav'd him in the darkness far from me.
O Friendship, prelibation of divine
Enjoyment, union exquisite of soul,
How many blessings do I owe to thee,

How much of incommunicable woe!
The daises bloom among the tall green blades
Upon his grave, and listening you may hear
The Bothlin make sweet music as she flows;
And you may see the poplars by her brink
Twinkle their silvery leaflets in the sun.
O little wandering preacher, Bothlin brook!
Wind musically by his lonely grave.
O well-known face, for ever lost! and voice,
For ever silent! I have heard thee sing
In village inns what time the silver frost
Curtained the panes in silent ministry,
Sing old Scotch ballads full of love and woe,
While the assimilative snow fell white and calm
With ceaseless lapse. And I have seen thee dance
Wild galliards with the buxom lasses, far
In lone farm-houses set on whistling hills,
While the storm thickened into thunder-cloud.
Dear mentor in all rustic merriment,

Ever as hearty as the night was long!
I miss thee often, as I do to-night,
And my heart fills; and thy beloved songs
The music and the words ring in my ears,
Then Lowland lassie wilt thou go—until
My eyes are full of tears, dear heart! dear heart!
And I could pass the perilous edge of death
To see thy dear, dear face, and hear again
The old wild music as of old, of old.

But as the Luggie with a plaintive song
Twists thro' a glen of greenest gloom, and gropes
For open sunshine; and, the shadows past,
Glides quicker-footed thro' divided meads
With sliding purl, so from that tale of gloom
My song with happier motions seeks the calm
And quiet smoothness of a silver end.
From orient valleys where as lucent dew
As ever jewelled Hermon, falls and shines

Fulfilled by sunrise; where slant arrow-showers
Of golden beams make every twinkling drop
A diamond, and every blade of grass
A glory;—comes the earth-born wanderer
Sweet Luggie, singing. Over the mill-dam
Sounding, a cataract in miniature,
White-robed it dashes thro' unceasing mist.
Thro' ivied bridge, adown its rocky bed
Shadowed by wavy limes whose branches bend
Kissing the wave to ripples, on it purls
Abrupt, capricious, past the hazel bower
Where marriageable maid is being woo'd;
And as on sward of velvet by her side
Her lover low reclines, while his dear tongue
Voices warm passion—she confiding lays
All her mild beauty in his manly breast
Blushing. Ah, Luggie! sure you murmur now
Clearly and dearly o'er thy pumy stones!
And when amid a pause of thought they hear

Thy babblement of music, never a shade
Darkens their souls. Thy song is happiness,
A revelation of sweet sympathies
By them interpreted; for never yet
Was Nature sullen when the spirit shone.
This is in twilight, when that only star
White Hesperus from chastest azure grows;
And as night trails her thousand shadows slow
Over the spinning world, the streamlet sings
Her mother earth asleep. O Autumn nights!
When skies are deeply blue, and the full moon
Soars in voluptuous whiteness, Juno-like,
A passionate splendour; when in the great south
Orion like a frozen skeleton
Hints of his ancient hugeness and mail'd strength;
And Cassiopeia glimmers cold and clear
Upon her throne of seven diamonds!
In the thick-foliaged brake, the nightingale
Of Scotland, chirping stonechacker, prolongs

With *whit, whit, chirr-r* the day's full melody.
Far-sounding thro' blue silence and smooth air;
The drumming noise of the hoarse waterfall
Is heard unheeded all by homely fires,
And heard unheeded all in hazel bower
Where love wings hours of serene joy; and still
As roams with *eerie* wail the unbodied wind
Thro' ghostly glen of pine, the maiden clings
More closely, till two firm entwining arms
Press comfort; and there is a touch of lips.

Now in this season—ere the flickering leaves
Touch'd with October's fiery alchemy
Grow sere and crisp—is shorn the meadow-hay.
Mingled with spiral orchis, dim blue-bell
Of delicatest azure, crowfoot smooth,
And ox-eye flaunting with faint flowers wild,
Nameless to me—the fragrant rye-grass grew.
Now with a measured sweep the keen-edged scythe

Cuts all to wither in the imbrowning sun.
Two golden days o'erpast (with eves of cloud
Magnificently coloured, heaped and strewn
Confusedly) the country lasses come
Bare-armed, bare-angled; and 'mid honest mirth
And homely jests with tinkling laughter winged,
Gather the fading balm. With kindling eyes,
And all the life of maidenhood aflame
In little tremulous pants,—they carry light
The warm load to the stack.

Oh, many a time

The old man, building slow the rising stack,
Saw and reprov'd not our wild merriment:
Remembering, half-sad, his own fresh youth
When beauty was a magic to the soul
And a fair face a charm; when a lip-touch
Was necromancy; and the perfect life
A wondrous yearning after womanhood.

But at the breathless nerve-dissolving noon,
When hot the undiminished sun downthrows
Direct his beams, they from the field retire
To cool consoling grove, or haply seek
The drowsy pool by beechen shadow chilled,
To lave the limbs relaxed. With eager leap,
Headlong they plunge from the enamelled bank
Into the liquid cold, and slowly move
With measured strokes and palms outspread; while
oft,

When the clear water rises o'er the lip
Dallying, they uptilt the swelling chest
In unspent vigour.

Oh, the pleasant time!

Pleasant beneath embowering trees, when day
Hides with her silken mists the distant scene
And breathes afar a nerve-dissolving steam—
Pleasant in sweet consolatory shade
To wander pensive. Then the soul serenest

The turbulent passions, and in devout trance,
Unconscious of celestial power, reveals
The God reflected in fair natural forms.
For as the Sun disdains the vulgar gaze
In his uplifted sphere, yet in the broad
Gray Ocean shews a softer face, so God
In nature shines. Oh, sweet the bowery path
Of fair Glenconner, where in volant youth
I saw the heroes of divine Romance.
No pathway winding through fresh orange groves,
Leading to white Campanian city, set
Inviolably by the sapphire sea,
Can fair Glenconner's umbrage-shadowed way
Excel. The bird-embowering beechen boughs,
Kissing each other, on the dusty way
Throw trembling shadows; and when warm west
winds
Roam hither in voluptuous unconcern,
There is a music and a fragrancy

Upon Glenconner, like the music hymned
By quires angelic on cerulean floors.
Deem not I speak in vanity, or speak
In false hyperbole, as poets do,
When languaging in love the radiance
Of maids; but there is beauty and delight
And passive feeling sweeter than all sense,
To him who walks beneath the boughs, and hears
The humming music like the sound of seas.
There have I dreamed for hours—and gathered
there

The homely inspiration which fulfils
The yearning of my soul. There have I felt
The unconfined divinity which lies
In beauty; and when the eternal stars
Have twinkled silver thro' illumined leaves,
I could not choose but worship.

O fair eves

Of undescribable sweetness long ago !

When gloaming caught me musing unawares,

Musing alone beneath the whispering leaves

That overshade Glenconner. Hour of calm

Suggestive thought, when, like a robe, the earth

Puts on a shadowy pensiveness, and stills

The music of her motions multiform.

Day lingered in the west ; and thro' a sky

Of thinly-waning orange, sullen clouds

Of amethyst, with flamy purple edged,

Moved evenly in sluggish pilotage.

The windless shades of quiet eventide

Slow gathered, and the sweet concordant tones

Of melody within the leafy brake

Died clearly, till the Mavis piped alone ;

Then softly from the jasper sky, a star

Drew radiant silver, brightening as the west

Darkened. But ere the semicircled moon

Shed her white light adown the lucent air,

The Mavis ceased, and thro' the thin gloom brake
The Corncraik's curious cry, the sylvan voice
Of the shy bird that haunts the bladed corn;
And suddenly, yet silently, the blue
Deepened, until innumerable white stars
Thro' crystal smooth and yielding ether drooped,
Not coldly, but in passionate June glow.

The Corncraik now, 'mong tall green bladed corn,
Breasted her eggs with feathers dew-besprent,
And stayed her human cry. The silence left
A gap within the soul, a sudden grief,
An emptiness in the low sighing air.

Then swooning through full night, the summer'd
earth

Bosom'd her children into tender rest;
Now delicately chambered ladies breathe
Their souls asleep in white limb'd luxury.
O Virgins purest lipped! with snowy lids
Soft closed on living eyes! O unkissed cheeks,

Half-sunk in pillowy pressure, and round arms
In the sweet pettishness of silver dreams
Flung warm into the cold unheeding air!
Sleep! soft bedewer of infantine eyes,
Pouter of rosy little lips! plump hands
Are doubled into deeply dimpled fists
And stretched in rosy langour, curls are laid
In fragrance on the rounded baby-face,
Kiss-worthy darling! Stiller of clear tongues
And silvery laughter! Now the musical noise
Of little feet is silent, and blue shoes
No more come pattering from the nursery door.
Death is not of thee, Sleep! Thy calm domain
Is tempered with a dreamy bliss, and dimmed
With haunted glooms, and richly sanctified
With the fine elements of Paradise.
Burn in the gleaming sky, ye far-off Stars!
And thou, O inoffensive Crescent! lift
The wonder of thy softness, the white shell

Of thy clear beauty, till the wholesome dawn
Wither thy brightness pale, and borrowed pride!

But sleep supine, on indolent afternoon
Ere the winds wake, and holy mountain airs
Descend, is sweet. Oh, let the bard describe
The sacred spot where, underneath the round
Green odoriferous sycamore, he lay
Sleepless, yet half asleep, in that one mood
When the quick sense is duped, and angel wings
Make spiritual music. Sweet and dim
The sacred spot, beloved not alone
For its own beauty: but the memories,
The pictures of the past which in the mind
Arise in fair profusion, each distinct
With the soft hue of some peculiar mood,
Enchant to living lustre what before
Was to the untaught vision simply fair.
In a fair valley, carpeted with turf

Elastic, sloping upwards from the stream,
A rounded sycamore in honied leaves
Most plenteous, murmurous with humming bees,
Shadows a well. Darkly the crystal wave.
Gleams cold, secluded; on its polished breast
Imaging twining boughs. No pitcher breaks
Its natural sleep, except at morn and eve
When my good mother thro' the dewy grass
Walks patient with her vessels, bringing home
The clear refreshment. Every blowing Spring,
A snowdrop with pure streaks of delicate green
Upon its inmost leaves, from withered grass
Springs whitely, and within its limpid breast
Is mirror'd whitely. Not a finger plucks
This hidden beauty; but it blooms and dies,
In lonely lustre blooms and lonely dies—
Unknown, unloved, save by one simple heart
Poetic, the creator of this song.
And after this frail luxury hath given

Its little life in keeping to the soul
Of all the worlds, a robin builds its nest
In lowly cleft, a foot or so above
The water. His dried leaves, and moss, and grass
He hither carries, lining all with hair
For softness. I have laid the hand that writes
These rhymes belovèd, on the crimson breast,
Sleek-soft, that panted o'er the five unborn;
While, leaf-hid, o'er me sang the watchful mate
Plaintive, and with a sorrow in the song,
In silvan nook where anchoret might dwell
Contented. Often on September days,
When woods were efflorescent, and the fields
Refulgent with the bounty of the corn,
And warming sunshine filled the breathless air
With a pale steam,—in heart-confused mood
Have I worn holidays enraptured there;
For, O dear God! there is a pure delight
In dreaming: in those mental-weary times,

When the vext spirit finds a false content
In fashioning delusions. Oh, to lie
Supinely stretched upon the shaded turf,
Beholding thro' the openings of green leaves
White clouds in silence navigating slow
Cerulean seas illimitable! Hushed
The drowsy noon, and, with a stilly sound
Like harmony of thought, the Luggie frets—
Its bubbling mellowed to a musical hum
By distance. Then the influences faint,
Those visionary impulses that swell
The soul to inspiration, crowding come
Mysterious: and phantom memory
(Ghost of dead feeling) haunts the undissolved,
The unsubvertive temple of the soul!

But as thro' loamy meadows lipping slow
Eats the fern-fringèd Luggie; and in spray
Leaps the mill-dam, and o'er the rocky flats

Spreads in black eddies; so my firstborn song
Hastes to the end in heedless vagrancy.

O ravishingly sweet the clacking noise
Of looms that murmur in our quiet dell!

No fairer valley Dyer ever dreamed—

Dyer, best river-singer, bard among.

Ten thousand. Reader, hasten ye and come,

And see the Luggie wind her liquid stream

Thro' copsy villages and spiry towns;

And see the Bothlin trotting swift of foot

From glades of alder, eager to combine

Her dimpling harmony with Luggie's calm

Clear music, like the music of the soul.

But where you see the meeting, reader, stay,

O stay and hear the music of the looms.

Thro' homely rustic bridge with ivy shagged,

(Which you shall see if ever you do come

A summer pilgrim to our valley fair,)

The Luggie flows with bells of foam-like stars

About its surface. A smooth bleaching-green
Spreads its soft carpet to the open doors
Of simple houses, shining-white. Blue smoke
Curls thro' the breathing air to the tree-tops
Thin spreading, and is lost. A humming noise
Industrious is heard, the clack of looms,
Whereon sit maidens, homely fair, and full
Of household simpleness, who sing and weave,
And sing and weave thro' all the easy hours,
Each day to-morrow's counterpart, and smooth
Memory the mirror wherein golden Hope,
Contented, sees herself. Here dwell an old
Couple whose lives have known twice forty years
(My mother's parents), their sage spirits touched
With blest anticipation of a home
Celestial bright, wherein they may fulfil
The life which death discovers. Last winter night
I, an accustomed visitant, beheld
The dear old pair. He in an easy chair

Lay dozing, while beside her noiseless wheel
She sat, her brow into her lap declined,
And half asleep! Sure sign, my mother said,
Of the conclusion of mortality.

A boy of ten, their grandson, on the floor
Lay stretched in early slumber; all the three
Unconscious of my entrance. A strange sight,
Fraught with strange lessons for the human soul.

In the first portion of her married life,
This woman, now, alas! so weary, old,
Bore daughters five; of well-beloved sons
An equal number. Some of them died young,
But six are yet alive, and dwelling all
Within a mile of her own house. The flower,
The idol of the mother, and her pride,
Dear magnet of all hopes, embodiment
Of heavenly blessings, was the youngest son,
Youngest of all. Me often has she told
How not a man could fling the stone with him;

That in his shoes he outran racers fleet
Barefooted; dancing on the shaven green
On summer holidays and autumn eves
(As to this day they do) his laugh was clearest,
Lightest his step; and he could thrill the hearts
Of simple women by a natural grace,
And perilous recital of love tales.
I cannot tell by what mysterious means,
Day-dream, or silver vision of the night,
Or sacred show of reason, picturing
A smooth ambition and calm happiness
For years of weaker age—but suddenly
In prime of life there flowered in his soul
An inextinguishable love to be
A minister of God. When holy schemes
Govern the motions of the spirit, ways
Are found to compass them. With wary care,
Frugality praiseworthy, and the strength
Of two strong arms, he in the summer months

Hoarded a competence equivalent
To all demands, until the sessions end.
Whate'er by manual labour he had gained
Thro' the clear summer months in verdant fields,
With brooks of silver laced, and cool'd with winds,
Was spent in winter in the smoky town.
But when his annual course of study past
He with his presence blessed his father's house,
With what a sacred sanctity of hope
Eager his mother dreamed, or garrulous
Spake of him every where—his foreign ways,
And midnight porings o'er *uncanny* books.
His father, with a stern delight suffused,
Grew a proud man of some importance now
In his own eyes; for who in all the vale
Had e'er a son so noble and so learned,
So worthy as his own?
So time wore on: but when three years complete
Had perfected their separate destinies,

A change stole o'er the current of their lives,
As a cloud-shadow glooms the crystal stream.
Their son came home, but with his coming came
Sorrow. A hue too beautifully fair
Brighten'd his cheek, as sunlight tints a cloud.
His face had caught a trick of joy more sad
Than visible grief; and all the subtle frame
Of human life, so wonderfully wrought,
A mystery of mechanism, was wearing
In sore uneasy manner to the grave.
What need to tell what every heart must know
In sympathy prophetic? Long time,
A varied year in seasons four complete,
(For the white snow-drop o'er my mother's well
Twice oped its whitest leaves among the green)
He lay consuming. It must needs have been
A weary trial to the thinking soul,
Thus with a consciousness of coming death,
The grim Attenuation! evermore

Nearing insatiate. At her spinning-wheel
His mother sat; and when his voice grew faint,
A simple whistle by his pillow lay,
And at its sound she entered patient, sad,
Her soothing love to minister, her hope
To nourish to its fading. But his breath
Grew weaker ever; and his dry pale lips
Closing upon the little instrument,
Could not produce a faintly audible note!
A little bell, the plaything of a child,
Now at his bedside hung, and its clear tones
Tinkled the weary summons. Thus his time
Narrowed to a completion, and his soul,
Immortal in its nature, thro' his eyes
Yearning, beheld the majesty of Him
Great in His mystery of godliness,
Fulfiller of the dim Apocalypse!

Twelve years have past since then, and he is now

A happy memory in the hearts of those
Who knew him; for to know him was to love.
And oft I deem it better, as the fates,
Or God, whose will is fate, have proven it;
For had he lived and fallen (as who of us
Doth perfectly? and let him that is proud
Take heed lest he do fall) he would have been
A sadness to them in their aged hours.
But now he is an honour and delight;
A treasure of the memory; a joy
Unutterable: by the lone fireside
They never tire to speak his praise, and say
How, if he had been spared, he would have been
So great, and good, and noble as, (they say)
The country knows; although I know full well
That not a man in all the parish round
Speaks of him ever; he is now forgot,
And this his natal valley knows him not.—

And this his natal valley knows him not?
The well-belovèd, nothing?—the fair face
And pliant limbs, poor indistinctive dust?
The body, blood, and network of the brain
Crumbled as a clod crumbles! Is this all?
A turf, a date, an epitaph, and then
Oblivion, and profound nonentity!
And thus his natal valley knows him not.
Trees murmur to the passing wind, streams flow,
Flowers shine with dewdrops in the shady glens,
All unintelligent creation smiles
In loving-kindness; but, like a light dream
Of morning, man arises in fair show,
Like the hued rainbow from incumbent gloom
Elicited, he shines against the sun—
A momentary glory. Not a voice
Remains to whisper of his whereabouts:
The palpable body in its mother's breast
Dissolves, and every feature of the face

Is lost in feculent changes. O black earth!
Wrap from bare eyes the slow decaying form,
The beauty rotting from the living hair,
The body made incapable thro' sin
God's Spirit to contain. Earth, wrap it close
Till the heavens vibrate to the trump of doom!

This is not all: for the invisible soul
Betrays the soft desire, the quenchless wish,
To live a purer life, more proximate
To the prime Fountain of all life. The power
Of vivid fancy and the boundless scenes,
(High coloured with the colouring of Heaven)
Creations of imagination, tell
The mortal yearnings of immortal souls!
Now, while around me in blind labour, winds
Howl, and the raindrops lash the streaming pane;
Now, while the pine-glen on the mountain side
Roars in its wrestling with the sightless foe,

And the black tarn grows hoary with the storm;—
Amid the external elemental war,
My soul with calm comportment—more becalmed
By the wild tempest furious without—
Sits in her sacred cell, and ruminates
On Death, severe discloser of new life.
When the well-known and once embraceable form
Is but a handful of white dust, the soul
Grows in divine dilation, nearer God.
Therefore grieve not, my heart, that unsustained
His memory died among us, that no more,
While yet the grass is hoary and the dawn
Lingers, he shyly thro' untrodden fields
Brushes his early path: that he no more
Beneath the beech, in lassitude outstretched,
Ponders the holy strains of Israel's King;
For in translated glory, and new clothed
With Incorruptible, he purer air
Breathes in a fairer valley. There no storm

Maddens as now ; no flux, and no opaque,
But all is calm, and permanent, and clear,
God's glory and the Lamb illumine all !

Now ends this song—not for self-honour sung,
But in the Luggie's service. It hath been
A crownèd vision and a silver dream,
That I should touch this valley with renown
Eternal, make the fretting waters gleam
In light above the common light of earth.
The shoreless air of heaven is purer here,
The golden beams more keenly crystalline,
The skies more deeply sapphired. For to me,
About these emerald fields and lawny hills,
There linger glories which you cannot see,
And influences which you cannot feel,
Delight and incommunicable woe !
My home is here ; and like a patient star,
Shining between untroubled Paradise

And my own soul, a mother shines therein,
The sole perfection of true womanhood :
A father—with the wisdom which pertains
To gray experience, and that stern delight
In naked truth, and reason which belongs
To the intense reflective mind—hath told
His fifty winters here. And all the hopes
Which gild the present; all the sad regrets
Which dull the past, are present to my soul
In the external forms and colourings
Of this dear valley. Therefore do I yearn
To make its stream flow in undying verse,
Low-singing thro' the labyrinthine dell!

And let forgiving charity preclude
Harsh judgments from the singer: not that he
Fearfully would forestal the righteous word,
Blameworthy, spoken in kindness, and that truth
Which sanctions condemnation. Yet, dear Lord,

A youthful flattering of the spirit, touched
With a desire unquenchable, displays
My hope's delirium. Oh! if the dream
Fade into nothing, into worse than nought,
Blackness of darkness like the golden zones
Of an autumnal sunset, and the night
Of unfulfilled ambition closes round
My destiny, think what an awful hell
O'erwhelms the conquer'd soul! Therefore, O men
Who guard with jealousy and loving care
The honour of our sacred literature,
Read with a kindness born of trustful hope,
Forgiving rambling schoolboy thoughts, too plain
To utter with a spasm, or clothe in cold
Mosaic fretwork of well-pleasing words,
Forgiving youth's vagaries, want of skill,
And blind devotional passion for my home!

IN THE SHADOWS.

A POEM IN SONNETS.



Induction.

ENTER, scared mortal! and in awe behold
The chancel of a dying poet's mind,
Hung round, ah! not adorned, with pictures bold
And quaint, but roughly touched for the refined.
The chancel not the charnel-house! For I
To God have raised a shrine immaculate
Therein, whereon His name to glorify,
And daily mercies meekly celebrate.
So in, scared breather! here no hint of death—
Skull or cross-bones suggesting sceptic fear;
Yea rather calmer beauty, purer breath
Inhaled from a diviner atmosphere.

I.

IF it must be; if it must be, O God!

That I die young, and make no further moans;
That, underneath the unrespective sod,

In unescutcheoned privacy, my bones
Shall crumble soon,—then give me strength to bear

The last convulsive throe of too sweet breath!
I tremble from the edge of life, to dare

The dark and fatal leap, having no faith,
No glorious yearning for the Apocalypse;

But, like a child that in the night-time cries
For light, I cry; forgetting the eclipse

Of knowledge and our human destinies.
O peevish and uncertain soul! obey
The law of life in patience till the Day.

II.

“WHOM the gods love die young.” The thought
is old;

And yet it soothed the sweet Athenian mind.
I take it with all pleasure, overbold,

Perhaps, yet to its virtue much inclined
By an inherent love for what is fair.

This is the utter poetry of woe—
That the bright-flashing gods should cure despair
By love, and make youth precious here below.

I die, being young; and, dying, could become
A pagan, with the tender Grecian trust.

Let death, the fell anatomy, benumb

The hand that writes, and fill my mouth with
dust—

Chant no funereal theme, but, with a choral
Hymn, O ye mourners! hail immortal youth au-
roral!

III.

WITH the tearworthy four, consumption killed
In youthful prime, before the nebulous mind
Had its symmetric shapeliness defined,
Had its transcendent destiny fulfilled.—

May future ages grant me gracious room,
With Pollock, in the voiceless solitude
Finding his holiest rapture, happiest mood;
Poor White for ever poring o'er the tomb;

With Keats, whose lucid fancy mounting far
Saw heaven as an intenser, a more keen
Redintegration of the Beauty seen

And felt by all the breathers on this star;
With gentle Bruce, flinging melodious blame
On the Future for an uncompleted name.

IV.

OH many a time with Ovid have I borne
My father's vain, yet well-meant reprimand,
To leave the sweet-air'd, clover-purple'd land
Of rhyme—its Lares loftily forlorn,
With all their pure humanities unworn—
To batten on the bare Theologies!
To quench a glory lighted at the skies,
Fed on one essence with the silver morn,
Were of all blasphemies the most insane.
So deeplier given to the delicious spell
I clung to thee, heart-soothing Poesy!
Now on a sick-bed rack'd with arrowy pain
I lift white hands of gratitude, and cry,
Spirit of God in Milton! was it well?

V.

LAST night, on coughing slightly with sharp pain,

There came arterial blood, and with a sigh
Of absolute grief I cried in bitter vein,

That drop is my death-warrant: I must die.
Poor meagre life is mine, meagre and poor!

Rather a piece of childhood thrown away;
An adumbration faint; the overture

To stifled music; year that ends in May;
The sweet beginning of a tale unknown;

A dream unspoken; promise unfulfilled;
A morning with no noon, a rose unblown—

All its deep rich vermilion crushed and killed
I' th' bud by frost:—Thus in false fear I cried,
Forgetting that to abolish death Christ died.

VI.

SWEETLY, my mother! Go not yet away—

I have not told my story. Oh, not yet,
With the fair past before me, can I lay

My cheek upon the pillow to forget.

O sweet, fair past, my twenty years of youth

Thus thrown away, not fashioning a man;
But fashioning a memory, forsooth!

More feminine than follower of Pan.

O God! let me not die for years and more!

Fulfil Thyself, and I will live then surely
Longer than a mere childhood. Now heartsore,

Weary, with being weary—weary, purely.

In dying, mother, I can find no pleasure

Except in being near thee without measure.

VII.

HEW Atlas for my monument; upraise
A pyramid for my tomb, that, undestroyed
By rank, oblivion, and the hungry void,
My name shall echo through prospective days.

O careless conqueror! cold, abysmal grave!
Is it not sad—is it not sad, my heart—
To smother young ambition, and depart
Unhonoured and unwilling, like death's slave?
No rare immortal remnant of my thought
Embalms my life; no poem, firmly reared
Against the shock of time, ignobly feared—
But all my life's progression come to nought.
Hew Atlas! build a pyramid in a plain!
Oh, cool the fever burning in my brain!

VIII.

FROM this entangling labyrinthine maze
Of doctrine, creed, and theory; from vague
Vain speculations: the detested plague
Of spiritual pride, and vile affrays
Sectarian, good Lord, deliver me!
Nature! thy placid monitory glory
Shines uninterrogated, while the story
Goes round of this and that theology,
This creed, and that, till patience close the list.
Once more on Carronben's wind-shrilling height
To sit in sovereign solitude, and quite
Forget the hollow world—a pantheist
Beyond Bonaventura! This were cheer
Passing the tedious tale of shallow pulpiteer.

IX.

A VALE of tears, a wilderness of woe,
A sad unmeaning mystery of strife;
Reason with Passion strives, and Feeling ever
Battles with Conscience, clear-eyed arbiter.

Thus spake I in sad mood not long ago,
To my dear father, of this human life,

Its jars and phantasies. Soft answered he,
With soul of love strong as a mountain river:

We make ourselves—Son, you are what you are
Neither by fate nor providence nor cause

External: all unformed humanity
Waiteth the stamp of individual laws;

And as you love and act, the plastic spirit
Doth the impression evermore inherit.

X.

LAST Autumn we were four, and travelled far
With Phœbe in her golden plenilune,
O'er stubble-fields where sheaves of harvest boon
Stood slanted. Many a clear and stedfast star
Twinkled its radiance thro' crisp-leaved beeches,
Over the farm to which, with snatches rare
Of ancient ballads, songs, and saucy speeches,
He hurried, happy mad. Then each had there
A dove-eyed sister pining for him, four
Fair ladies legacied with loveliness,
Chaste as a group of stars, or lilies blown
In rural nunnery. O God! Thy sore
Strange ways expound. Two to the grave have
gone
Without apparent reason more or less.

XI.

NOW, while the long-delaying ash assumes
The delicate April green, and, loud and clear,
Through the cool, yellow, mellow twilight glooms,
The thrush's song enchants the captive ear;
Now, while a shower is pleasant in the falling,
Stirring the still perfume that wakes around;
Now, that doves mourn, and from the distance
calling,
The cuckoo answers, with a sovereign sound,—
Come, with thy native heart, O true and tried!
But leave all books; for what with converse high,
Flavoured with Attic wit, the time shall glide
On smoothly, as a river floweth by,
Or as on stately pinion, through the gray
Evening, the culver cuts his liquid way.

XII.

WHY are all fair things at their death the fairest?

Beauty the beautifullest in decay?

Why doth rich sunset clothe each closing day
With ever-new apparelling the rarest?

Why are the sweetest melodies all born
Of pain and sorrow? Mourneth not the dove
In the green forest gloom, an absent love?

Leaning her breast against that cruel thorn,
Doth not the nightingale, poor bird, complain
And integrate her uncontrollable woe
To such perfection, that to hear is pain?

Thus, Sorrow and Death—alone realities—
Sweeten their ministration, and bestow
On troublous life a relish of the skies!

XIII.

AND well-belovèd, is this all, this all?

Gone, like a vapour which the potent morn
Kills, and in killing glorifies! I call

Through the lone night for thee, my dear first-
born

Soul-fellow! but my heart vibrates in vain.

Ah! well I know, and often fancy forms
The weather-blown churchyard where thou art
lain—

The churchyard whistling to the frequent storms.
But down the valley, by the river side,

Huge walnut-trees—bronze-foliaged, motionless
As leaves of metal—in their shadows hide

Warm nests, low music, and true tenderness.
But thou, betrothed! art far from me, from me.
O heart! be merciful—I loved him utterly.

XIV.

FATHER! when I have passed, with deathly
swoon,

Into the ghost-world, immaterial, dim,

O may nor time nor circumstance dislimn

My image from thy memory, as noon

Steals from the fainting bloom the cooling dew!

Like flower, itself completing bud and bell,

In lonely thicket, be thy sorrow true,

And in expression secret. Worse than hell

To see the grave hypocrisy—to hear

The crocodilian sighs of summer friends

Outraging grief's assuasive, holy ends!

But thou art faithful, father, and sincere;

And in thy brain the love of me shall dwell

Like the memorial music in the curved sea-shell.

XV.

FROM my sick-bed gazing upon the west,
Where all the bright effulgencies of day
Lay steeped in sunless vapours, raw and gray,—
Herein (methought) is mournfully exprest
The end of false ambitions, sullen doom
Of my brave hopes, Promethean desires :
Barren and perfumeless, my name expires
Like summer-day setting in joyless gloom.
Yet faint I not in sceptical dismay,
Upheld by the belief that all pure thought
Is deathless, perfect : that the truths out-wrought
By the laborious mind cannot decay,
Being evolutions of that Sovereign Mind
Akin to man's ; yet orb'd, exhaustless, undefined.

XVI.

THE daisy-flower is to the summer sweet,
Though utterly unknown it live and die;
The spheral harmony were incomplete
Did the dew'd laverock mount no more the sky,
Because her music's link'd sorcery
Bewitched no mortal heart to heavenly mood.
This is the law of nature, that the deed
Should dedicate its excellence to God,
And in so doing find sufficient meed.
Then why should I make these heart-burning cries
In sickly rhyme with morbid feeling rife,
For fame and temporal felicities?
Forgetting that in holy labour lies
The scholarship severe of human life.

XVII.

O GOD, it is a terrible thing to die
Into the inextinguishable life;
To leave this known world with a feeble cry,
All its poor jarring and ignoble strife.
O that some shadowy spectre would disclose
The Future, and the soul's confineless hunger
Satisfy with some knowledge of repose!
For here the lusts of avarice waxeth stronger,
Making life hateful; youth alone is true,
Full of a glorious self-forgetfulness:
Better to die inhabiting the new
Kingdom of faith and promise, and confess,
Even in the agony and last eclipse,
Some revelation of the Apocalypse!

XVIII.

WISE in his day that heathen emperor,
To whom, each morrow, came a slave, and cried—
“Philip, remember thou must die:” no more.
To me such daily voice were misapplied—
Disease guests with me; and each cough, or cramp,
Or aching, like the Macedonian slave,
Is my *memento mori*. 'Tis the stamp
Of God's true life to be in dying brave.
“I fear not death, but dying”*—not the long
Hereafter, sweetened by immortal love;
But the quick, terrible last breath—the strong
Convulsion. Oh, my Lord of breath above!
Grant me a quiet end, in easeful rest—
A sweet removal, on my mother's breast.

* This is a saying of Socrates.

XIX.

OCTOBER'S gold is dim—the forests rot,
The weary rain falls ceaseless, while the day
Is wrapp'd in damp. In mire of village way
The hedge-row leaves are stamp'd, and, all forgot,
The broodless nest sits visible in the thorn.

Autumn, among her drooping marigolds,
Weeps all her garnered sheaves, and empty folds,
And dripping orchards—plundered and forlorn.
The season is a dead one, and I die!

No more, no more for me the spring shall make
A resurrection in the earth and take
The death from out her heart—O God, I die!
The cold throat-mist creeps nearer, till I breathe
Corruption. Drop, stark night, upon my death!

XX.

DIE down, O dismal day! and let me live.

And come, blue deeps! magnificently strewn
With coloured clouds—large, light, and fugitive—

By upper winds through pompous motions blown.
Now it is death in life—a vapour dense

Creeps round my window till I cannot see
The far snow-shining mountains, and the glens
Shagging the mountain-tops. O God! make free
This barren, shackled earth, so deadly cold—

Breathe gently forth Thy spring, till winter flies
In rude amazement, fearful and yet bold,

While she performs her custom'd charities.
I weigh the loaded hours till life is bare—
O God! for one clear day, a snowdrop, and sweet
air!

XXI.

SOMETIMES, when sunshine and blue sky prevail—

When spent winds sleep, and, from the budding larch,

Small birds, with incomplete, vague sweetness, hail

The unconfirmed yet quickening life of March,—
Then say I to myself, half-eased of care,

Toying with hope as with a maiden's token—
“This glorious, invisible fresh air

Will clear my blood till the disease be broken.”
But slowly, from the wild and infinite west,

Up-sails a cloud, full-charged with bitter sleet.
The omen gives my spirit much unrest;

I fling aside the hope, as indiscreet—
A false enchantment, treacherous and fair—
And sink into my habit of despair.

XXII.

O WINTER! wilt thou never, never go?

O Summer! but I weary for thy coming;
Longing once more to hear the Luggie flow,
And frugal bees laboriously humming.

Now, the east wind diseases the infirm,
And I must crouch in corners from rough weather.
Sometimes a winter sunset is a charm—

When the fired clouds, compacted, blaze together,
And the large sun dips, red, behind the hills.

I, from my window, can behold this pleasure;
And the eternal moon, what time she fills

Her orb with argent, treading a soft measure,
With queenly motion of a bridal mood,
Through the white spaces of infinitude.

XXIII.

OH, beautiful moon! Oh, beautiful moon! again

Thou persecutest me until I bend

My brow, and soothe the aching of my brain.

I cannot see what handmaidens attend

Thy silver passage as the heaven clears;

For, like a slender mist, a sweet vexation

Works in my heart, till the impulsive tears

Confess the bitter pain of adoration.

Oh, too, too beautiful moon! lift the white shell

Of thy soft splendour through the shining air!

I own the magic power, the witching spell,

And, blinded by thy beauty, call thee fair!

Alas! not often now thy silver horn

Shall me delight with dreams and mystic love

forlorn!

XXIV.

'TIS April, yet the wind retains its tooth.

I cannot venture in the biting air,
But sit and feign wild trash and dreams uncouth,

“Stretched on the rack of a too-easy chair.”

And when the day has howled itself to sleep,

The lamp is lighted in my little room;
And lowly, as the tender lapwings creep,

Comes my own mother, with her love's perfume.

O living sons with living mothers! learn

Their worth, and use them gently, with no
chiding;

For youth, I know, is quick; of temper stern

Sometimes; and apt to blunder without guiding.

So was I long, but now I see her move,

Transfigured in the radiant mist of love.

XXV.

LYING awake at holy eventide,
While in clear mournfulness the throstle's hymn
Hushes the night, and the great west grown dim
Laments the sunset's evanescent pride:
Lo! I behold an orb of silver brightly
Grow from the fringe of sunset, like a dream
From Thought's severe infinitude, and nightly
Show forth God's glory in its sacred gleam.
Ah, Hesper! maidenliest star that ere
Twinkled in firmament! cool gloaming's prime
Cheerer, whose fairness maketh wondrous fair
Old pastorals, and the Spenserian rhyme:—
Thy soft seduction doth my soul enthrall
Like music, with a dying, dying fall!

XXVI.

THERE are three bonnie Scottish melodies,
So native to the music of my soul,
That of its humours they seem prophecies.
The ravishment of Chaucer was less whole,
Less perfect, when the April nightingale
Let itself in upon him. Surely, Lord!
Before whom psaltery and clarichord,
Concentual with saintly song, prevail,
There lurks some subtle sorcery, to Thee
And heaven akin, in each woe-burning air!
Land of the Leal, and *Bonnie Bessie Lee*,
And *Home sweet Home*, the lilt of love's despair.
Now, in remembrance even, the feelings speak,
For lo! a shower of grace is on my cheek.

XXVII.

“Thou art wearin’ awa’, Jean,
Like snaw when it’s thaw, Jean;
Thou art wearin’ awa’
To the land o’ the leal.”—OLD SONG.

O THE impassable sorrow, mother mine!

Of the sweet, mournful air which, clear and well,
For me thou singest! Never the divine

Mahomedan harper, famous Israfel,
Such rich enchanting luxury of woe

Elicited from all his golden strings!
Therefore, dear singer sad! chant clear, and low,
And lovingly, the bard’s imaginings.

O poet unknown! conning thy verses o’er

In lone, dim places, sorrowfully sweet;
And O musician! touching the quick core

Of pity, when thy skilful closes meet—
My tears confess your witchery as they flow,
Since I, too, *wear* away like the unenduring snow.

XXVIII.

UPLIFT in unparticipated night

Oh indefinable Being! far retired
From mortal ken in uncreated light:

While demonstrating glories unacquired
When shall the wavering sciences evolve

The infinite secret, Thee? What mind shall scan
The tenour of Thy workmanship, or solve

The dark, perplexing destiny of man?
Oh! in the hereafter border-land of wonder,

Shall the proud world's inveterate tale be told,
The curtain of all mysteries torn asunder,

The cerements from the living soul unrolled?
Impatient questioner, soon, soon shall death
Reveal to thee these dim phantasmata of faith.

XXIX.

AND thus proceeds the mode of human life
From mystery to mystery again;
From God to God, thro' grandeur, grief, and strife,
A hurried plunge into the dark inane
Whence had we lately sprung. And is't for ever?
Ah! sense is blind beyond the gaping clay,
And all the eyes of faith can see it never.
We know the bright-hair'd sun will bring the
day,
Like glorious book of silent prophecy;
Majestic night assume her starry throne;
The wondrous seasons come and go: but we
Die, and to mortal ken for ever gone.
Who shall pry further? who shall kindle light
In the dread bosom of the infinite?

XXX.

O THOU of purer eyes than to behold
Uncleanness! sift my soul, removing all
Strange thoughts, imaginings fantastical,
Iniquitous allurements manifold.
Make it a spiritual ark; abode
Severely sacred, perfumed, sanctified,
Wherein the Prince of Purities may abide—
The holy and eternal Spirit of God.
The gross, adhesive loathsomeness of sin,
Give me to see. Yet, O far more, far more,
That beautiful purity which the saints adore
In a consummate Paradise within
The Veil,—O Lord, upon my soul bestow,
An earnest of that purity here below.

My Epitaph.

*Below lies one whose name was traced in sand.
He died, not knowing what it was to live :
Died, while the first sweet consciousness of manhood
To maiden thought electrified his soul,
Faint heatings in the calyx of the rose.
Bewildered reader ! pass without a sigh,
In a proud sorrow ! There is life with God
In other kingdom of a sweeter air.
In Eden every flower is blown : AMEN.*

POEMS NAMED AND WITHOUT
NAMES.



POEMS NAMED AND WITHOUT NAMES.

THE evening now is still and calm,

As if sad Eloïsa's soul

Had breathed a spiritual balm

Throughout the softened whole.

Within the azure of the sky

There shineth not a single star;

But in a soft serenity

The Crescent cometh from afar.

In darker lines the firs that shade

The house of Merkland round and round,

Come out, and from the fragrant glade

No liquid notes resound:

I heard the birds this livelong day,

In sweet unwrinkled blending,

As if this merry month of May
Should never have an ending.
O could I utter thoughts that rise,
O could I sing the tender
Softness of the summer skies,
In all their virgin splendour!
O crescent Moon, like pearlèd bark
To ferry souls to glory;
O silent deepening of the dark
O'er vale and promontory!
Alas, that I should live, and be
A churl in soul, while slowly
God makes the fearful eve, and breathes
A calm thro' hearts unholy!

O COOL the summer woods
Of dear Gartshore, where bloom
Soft clouds of white anemones
Among their own perfume.
And clear the little brooklet,
Singing an endless lay,
Winding its nameless waters
Close by the white highway.
And here in sweet sensation,
And soul-uneasy swoon,
I've lain for many a golden
Hour of a summer noon.
The cushats *crooned* around me
Their hoarse and amorous song;
And in a brooding drowsiness,
The echoes swooned along;

Till all the sweet sensations

Grew into utter pain,

And I was fain to wander

Sadly home again.

There have been brotherhoods in song,

And human friendships ever true;

There have been lovers unto death,

Yes, and right many too.

But never in the march of time,

And never in all mortal knowing,

From history or nobler rhyme,

Hath there been such a constant flowing:

One from mountains far away,

One from glades of emerald shining,

Flowing, flowing evermore

For a delicate combining.

If upon a summer's day,

When the air is blue and bracing,

You for Merkland take your way,

Sweet uneasy fancies chasing ;
You may see the famous grove—
If not famous, then most surely
Ripe for fame, which is but love—
Where they mingle most demurely.
Not in song and babbling play
Which no poet could unravel ;
But in tender simple way,
On a bed of golden gravel.
Where I sit I see them now,—
Bothlin with her endless winding
From a mountain's purple brow,
Sacred contemplation finding ;
In still nooks of shady rest,
Gleaming greenly 'neath the holly :
Youth, she says, is often blest
With a little melancholy.
Luggie from the orient fields
Wiser is, yet hath a beauty,

Which the snowy conscience yields
To the softened face of duty.
All she does bespeaks a grace,
Yet the grace hath that of sadness
We behold in many a face,
Where we had expected gladness.
But when Bothlin meets her there,
See the change to sudden glory!
Surely such another pair
Never met in classic story.
I could sing for half a day,
And my spirit, never weary,
Fashioning the vernal lay
With a linnet's impulse cheery.
But some night in leafy June,
You the place yourself may see;
When the light is in the moon,
Like the passion that's in me.

THE ANEMONE.

I HAVE wandered far to-day,
In a pleased unquiet way;
Over hill and songful hollow,
Vernal byeways, fresh and fair,
Did I simple fancies follow;
Till upon a hill-side bare,
Suddenly I chanced to see
A little white anemone.

Beneath a clump of furze it grew;
And never mortal eye did view
Its rathe and slender beauty, till
I saw it in no-mocking mood;
For with its sweetness did it fill
To me the ample solitude.

A fond remembrance made me see
Strange light in the anemone.

One April day when I was seven,
Beneath the clear and deepening heaven,
My father, God preserve him! went
With me a Scottish mile and more;
And in a playful merriment
He deck'd my bonnet o'er and o'er—
To fling a sunshine on his ease—
With tenderest anemones.

Now, gentle reader, as I live,
This snowy little bloom did give
My being most endearing throes.
I saw my father in his prime;
But youth it comes, and youth it goes,
And he has spent his blithest time:
Yet dearer grown thro' all to me,
And dearer the anemone.

So with the spirit of a sage
I pluck'd it from its hermitage,
And placed it 'tween the sacred leaves
Of *Agnes' Eve* at that rare part
Where she her fragrant robe unweaves,
And with a gently beating heart,
In troubled bliss and balmy woe,
Lies down to dream of Porphyro.

Let others sing of that and this,
In war and science find their bliss;
Vainly they seek and will not find
The subtle lore that nature brings
Unto the reverential mind,
The pathos worn by common things,
By every flower that lights the lea,
And by the pale anemone.

LAST night a vision was dispelled,

Which I can never dream again ;

A wonder from the earth has gone,

A passion from my brain.

I saw upon a budding ash

A cuckoo, and she blithely sung

To all the valleys round about,

While on a branch she swung.

Cuckoo, cuckoo : I looked around,

And like a dream fulfilled,

A slender bird of modest brown,

My sight with wonder thrilled.

I looked again and yet again ;

My eyes, thought I, do sure deceive me ;

But when belief made doubting vain,

Alas, the sight did grieve me.

For twice to-day I heard the cry,

The hollow cry of melting love;

And twice a tear bedimmed my eye.—

I *saw* the singer in the grove,

I saw him pipe his eager tone,

Like any other common bird,

And, as I live, the sovereign cry

Was not the one I always heard.

O why within that lusty wood

Did I the fairy sight behold?

O why within that solitude

Was I thus blindly overbold?

My heart, forgive me! for indeed

I cannot speak my thrilling pain:

The wonder vanished from the earth,

The passion from my brain.

THE YELLOWHAMMER.

IN fairy glen of Woodilee,
One sunny summer morning,
I plucked a little birchen tree,
The spongy moss adorning;
And bearing it delighted home,
I planted it in garden loam,
Where, perfecting all duty,
It flowered in tassel'd beauty.

When delicate April in each dell
Was silently completing
Her ministry in bud and bell,
To grace the summer's meeting;

My birchen tree of glossy rind
Determined not to be behind;
So with a subtle power
The buds began to flower.

And I could watch from out my house
The twigs with leaflets thicken;
From glossy rind to twining boughs
The milky sap 'gan quicken.
And when the fragrant form was green
No fairer tree was to be seen,
All Gartshore woods adorning,
Where doves are always mourning.

But never dove with liquid wing,
Or neck of changeful gleaming,
Came near my garden tree to sing
Or *croodle* out its meaning.
But this sweet day, an hour ago,

A yellowhammer clear and low,
In love and tender pity
Thrilled out his dainty ditty.

And I was pleased, as you may think,
And blessed the little singer:
'O fly for your mate to Luggie brink,
Dear little bird! and bring her;
And build your nest among the boughs,
A sweet and cosy little house
Where ye may well content ye,
Since true love is so plenty.

And when she sits upon her nest,
Here are cool shades to shroud her.'
At this the singer sang his best,
O louder yet, and louder;
Until I shouted in my glee,
His song had so enchanted me.

No nightingale could pant on
In joy so wise and wanton.

But at my careless noise he flew,
And if he chance to bring her
A happy bride the summer thro'
'Mong birchen boughs to linger,
I'll sing to you in numbers high
A summer song that shall not die,
But keep in memory clearly
The bird I love so dearly.

SNOW.

FLOWERS upon the summer lea,
Daisies, kingcups, pale primroses—
These are sung from sea to sea,
As many a darling rhyme discloses.
Tangled wood and hawthorn dale
In many a songful snatch prevail;
But never yet, as well I mind,
In all their verses can I find
A simple tune, with quiet flow,
To match the falling of the snow.

O weary passed each winter day,
And windily howled each winter night;
O miry grew each village way,
And mists enfolded every height;

And ever on the window pane
A froward gust blew down with rain,
And day by day in tawny brown
The Luggie stream came heaving down:—
I could have fallen asleep and dreamed
Until again spring sunshine gleamed.

And what! said I, is this the mode
That Winter kings it now-a-days?
The Robin keeps his own abode,
And pipes his independent lays.
I've seen the day on Merkland hill,
That snow has fallen with a will,
Even in November! Now, alas!
The whole year round we see the grass:—
Ah, winter now may come and go
Without a single fall of snow.

It was the latest day but one
Of winter, as I questioned thus;

And sooth! an angry mood was on,
As at a thing most scandalous;—
When lo! some hailstones on the pane
With sudden tinkle rang amain,
Till in an ecstasy of joy
I clapp'd and shouted like a boy—
Oh, rain may come and rain may go,
But what can match the falling snow!

It draped the naked sycamore
On Foordcroft hill, above the well;
The elms of Rosebank o'er and o'er
Were silvered richly as it fell.
The distant Campsie peaks were lost,
And farthest Criftin with his host
Of gloomy pine-trees disappeared,
Nor even a lonely ridge upreared.—
Oh, rain may come and rain may go,
But what can match the falling snow!

Afar upon the Solsgirth moor,

Each heather sprig of withered brown
Is fringed with thread of silver pure

As slow the soft flakes waver down;
And on Glenconner's lonely path,
And Gartshore's still and open strath,
It falleth, quiet as the birth
Of morning o'er the quickening earth.—
Oh, rain may come and rain may go,
But what can match the falling snow!

And all around our Merkland home

Is laid a sheet of virgin lawn;
On fairer, softer, ne'er did roam

The nimble Oread or Faun.
There is a wonder in the air,
A living beauty everywhere;
As if the whole had ne'er been planned,
But touched by Merlin's famous wand,

Suddenly woke beneath his hand
To potent bliss in fairy show—
A mighty ravishment of snow!

JOHN Frost, old Nature's jeweller, had beautified
the leas,
And the lustre of his fret-work was twinkling on
the trees,
As we rambled o'er the meadows in a meditative
ease.

We had left the town behind us for a roaming
holiday,
Beneath an arc of gloom, all dark and indistinct it
lay,
And the fog was wreathed about it like a robe of
iron-gray.

But a carpeting of leaflets, and a canopy of blue,
And the mystery of ether as the warming sunshine
grew,

Sent a mellow thrill of happiness our eager spirits
through.

And over lanes, where Winter bluff had shook
his hoary beard,

Where in the naked hedgerows the broodless nests
appear'd,

And the brown leaves of the beech-tree were with
silver gloss veneer'd.

We wandered and we pondered till half the morn
was spent,

And the red orb through the tangled boughs his
cunning vigour sent,

And the valley mists all melted at his glance omni-
potent.

Dim on a sloping hill-side, clothed in a misty
pall,

Stands a turret grey and hoary, where the ancient
ivies crawl,

Their Arab arms round casement, sill, and door,
and mould'ring wall.

And there we halted half-an-hour within a roofless
hall,

'Neath a bower of wildest ivy hanging downwards
from the wall,

Bearing in its grand luxuriance a flower funereal.

There we talked of the gay plumes erst bent to
pass the lintel old,

The maidens that were moved to smile at gallant
wooers bold,

The jovial nights of brave carouse, the wine-cups
manifold.

And all the faded glories of the mediæval time,
When the age was in its manhood, and the land
was in its prime,
And manly deeds were chanted in a bold heroic
rhyme.

Then, plucking each a sprig, bedecked with simple
yellow flower,
We scrambled sadly downwards from our old en-
chanted bower,
And the glory of the sunshine fell upon us like
a shower.

Once more beneath the concave of a clear effulgent
sky,
Where flocks of cawing rooks to the mansion
wavered by—
A mansion standing coldly 'mid a windy rookery.

And over breezy mountains, where the poacher,
with his gun,
Stood lonely as a boulder-stone, 'tween earth and
shining sun,
We wandered and we pondered till the winter day
was done.

OH, many a leaf will fall to-night,
As she wanders through the wood!
And many an angry gust will break
The dreary solitude.

I wonder if she's past the bridge,
Where Luggie moans beneath;
While rain-drops clash in planted lines
On rivulet and heath.

Disease hath laid his palsied palm
Upon my aching brow;
The headlong blood of twenty-one
Is thin and sluggish now.

'Tis nearly ten! A fearful night
Without a single star

To light the shadow on her soul
With sparkle from afar :
The moon is canopied with clouds,
And her burden it is sore ;—
What would wee Jackie do, if he
Should never see her more ?
Aye, light the lamp, and hang it up
At the window fair and free ;
'Twill be a beacon on the hill
To let your mother see.
And trim it well, my little Ann,
For the night is wet and cold,
And you know the weary, winding way
Across the miry wold.
All drenched will be her simple gown,
And the wet will reach her skin :
I wish that I could wander down,
And the red quarry win—
To take the burden from her back,

And place it upon mine ;
With words of cheerful condolence,
Not uttered to repine.
You have a kindly mother, dears,
As ever bore a child,
And heaven knows I love her well
In passion undefiled.
Ah me ! I never thought that she
Would brave a night like this,
While I sat weaving by the fire
A web of phantasies.
How the winds beat this home of ours
With arrow-falls of rain ;
This lonely home upon the hill
They beat with might and main.
And 'mid the tempest one lone heart
Anticipates the glow,
Whence, all her weary journey done,
Shall happy welcome flow.

'Tis after ten! Oh, were she here,
Young man altho' I be,
I could fall down upon her neck,
And weep right gushingly!
I have not loved her half enough,
The dear old toiling one,
The silent watcher by my bed,
In shadow or in sun.

“Happy child!
Thou art so exquisitely wild,
I think of thee with many tears,
For what may be thy lot in future years.”
WORDSWORTH.

THE goldening peach on the orchard wall,
Soft feeding in the sun,
Hath never so downy and rosy a cheek
As this laughing little one.
The brook that murmurs and dimples alone
Through glen, and grove, and lea,
Hath never a life so merry and true
As my brown little brother of three.
From flower to flower, and from bower to bower,
In my mother's garden green,
A-peering at this, and a-cheering at that,
The funniest ever was seen ;—
Now throwing himself in his mother's lap,

With his cheek upon her breast,
He tells his wonderful travels, forsooth !
And chatters himself to rest.
And what may become of that brother of mine,
Asleep in his mother's bosom ?
Will the wee rosy bud of his being, at last
Into a wild flower blossom ?
Will the hopes that are deepening as silent and fair
As the azure about his eye,
Be told in glory and motherly pride,
Or answered with a sigh ?
Let the curtain rest : for, alas ! 'tis told
That Mercy's hand benign
Hath woven and spun the gossamer thread
That forms the fabric so fine.
Then dream, dearest Jackie ! thy sinless dream,
And waken as blythe and as free ;
There's many a change in twenty long years,
My brown little brother of three.

SEVEN sycamores of wondrous fairness smooth,
And mealy green of trunk, and murmurous
In multitudinous sun-twinkling leaves,
This valley grace. Three fairer than the rest,
Which in the silent worship of my heart
I fondly call the brothers of Bridgend,
O'er cottage floors when doors are wide for heat,
And often on the face of cradled child,
Throw dusky shadows. And when lenient winds
Blow motion, the cool shadows flicker and play
Upon the floors, and glimpse the countenance
Of the sweet baby, till the mother laughs,
And bending downward, kisses. But of all
The trees that ever tufted hill or vale,
That ever took the breeze or sheltered nest,

Or rung with flowing melody of birds,
The strangest and the dearest, best and first,
Waves audibly upon a windy hill
Above the Luggie. In the front of Spring,
When the first crocus gleams among the grass,
One half shines out full-leaved, the other bare:
And when the Autumn violet hath lost
Its fragrance, and the meadow-hay is mown,
One half shines out full-leaved, the other bare.
It is two trees, whose marriageable boughs
Twine each with each and throw a common shade,
A chesnut and an elm. The former opes
Its oily buds whene'er the teeming south
Breathes life and warm intenerating balm,
But fades in early Autumn; while supreme
In vigorous development, the elm
Full-foliaged glimmers till October's end.
At the twin roots and facing the rich west
A summer seat is rustically carved,

A sylvan shelter from the mid-day sun :
But nor in mid-day nor when decent eve
Gathers her purples have I rested there ;
But when thro' crisp and fleecy clouds the moon
O'er the soft orient sheds a milder dawn :
Then tripping up the dewy lea, with step
Light as an antelope, a maiden came,
And all her radiance in my bosom laid ;
And on this seat, while high among the leaves,
Rain murmured, and the glory of the moon
Was dimmed, I whispered all my passion tale.
Ah me, ah me ! her silken hair downslid,
Her smooth comb dropt among the grass, and both
Stooped searching, and her burning cheek met mine :
And starting sudden upward, with her face
Rosed to the beating temples, meek she gazed,
Half sad, and the blue languish of her eyes
Drooped tearful. And in madness and delight,
I with my left arm zoned her little waist,

And with my right hand smoothed the silken hair
From her fair brow, snow-cold; and, by the doves
That bill and coo in Venus' pearly car!

There was a touch of lips. Then creeping close
Into my bosom like a little thing

That was confused, she cradled pantingly.

Thus, while the rain was murmuring overhead,
And the out-passioned moon thro' vaporous gloom
Dipt queenly, whispered I my perilous tale.

Ah me, ah me! a tender answer came;

For with her softling finger-tips she touched

My hand, warm laid upon her heart, and pressed
A meek approval with averted face.

O poet maker, darling love, sweet love,

Awakener of manhood and the life

Of life! But let me not like talking fool

Prate all thy virgin whiteness, all thy sweet
Deliciousness, for thou art living yet!

And as the rose that opens to the sun

Its downy leaves, scents sweetest at the core,
So all thy loveliness is but the robe
That clothes a maiden chastity of soul.

O hasten, hasten down your azure road,
And darken all the golden zones of heaven,
Bright Sun, for I am weary for my love.

SWEET Muse and well-beloved, with my decline
Declining, like a rose crushed unawares,
Having too early knowledge of decay,
Too subtle pleasure to behold the tree
Shed its thin foliage on the sluggish stream,—
What a sweet subject for thy silver sounds!

O for a quill pluck'd from the soaring wing
Of archangel, then dipt in holy dew,
To catch thy latest looks, thou loveliest
October, o'er the many-coloured woods!
October! vastlier disconsolate
Than Saturn guiding melancholy spheres,
Through ante-mundane silence and ripe death.

Ere the last stack is housed, and woods are bare,
And the vermilion fruitage of the brier
Is soaked in mist, or shrivelled up with frost;
Ere warm Spring nests are coldly to be seen
Tenantless, but for rain and the cold snow,
While yet there is a loveliness abroad,—
The frail and indescribable loveliness
Of a fair form Life with reluctance leaves,
Being there only powerful,—while the earth
Wears sackcloth in her great prophetic grief:—

Then the reflective melancholy soul,—
Aimlessly wandering with slow falling foot
The heath'ry solitude, in hope to assuage
The cunning humour of his malady,—
Loses his painful bitterness, and feels
His own specific sorrows one by one
Taken up in the huge dolour of all things.

O the sweet melancholy of the time
When gently, ere the heart appeals, the year
Shines in the fatal beauty of decay!
When the sun sinks enlarged on Carronben,
Nakedly visible without a cloud,
And faintly from the faint eternal blue
(That dim, sweet harebell-colour) comes the star
Which evening wears;—when Luggie flows in mist,
And in the cottage windows, one by one,
With sudden twinkle household lamps are lit,
What noiseless falling of the faded leaf!

Sweet on a blossoming summer's afternoon,
When Fancy plays the wizard in the brain,
Idly to saunter thro' a lusty wood!
But sweeter far—by how much sweeter, God
Alone hath knowledge—in a pensive mood,
Outstretched on green moss-velvet floss'd with
thyme,

To watch the fall o' the leaf before the moon
Shines out in sweet completion circular.

For when the sunset hath withdrawn its gold

And tawny glimmering, like the surcease

Of rich, low melody, erst inaudible streams

Find voices in their still unwearied flow;

And winds that have been much about the moors

And mountains, have a deadly feel of cold,

Forespeaking clear blue dawns and frosty chill.

MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS.

MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS.

A LIME-TREE broad of bough and rough of
trunk

Deepens a shadow, as the evening cool,
Over the Luggie gathering in deep pool
Contemplative, its waters summer-shrunk;
The Lammas floods have sucked away the mould
About its roots, and now in bare sunshine
Like knot of snakes they twine and inter-twine
Fantastic implication, fold in fold.

Secure in covert, 'neath the fringing fern

Lurks the bright-speckled trout, untroubled, save
When boyhood with a glorious unconcern
Eagerly plunges in the sleeping wave.

Here the much-musing poet might recapture
The inspiration flown, the vagrant rapture.

EZEKIEL, thus from the Lord God. Behold,
Mount Seir, I am against thee! Desolate,
Most desolate thy cloudy and dark fate.
Between the lips of talkers bad and bold,
Thy towns forsaken, and thy rivers rolled
Thro' silent wastes, are taken up, and great
The joy at thy high glories ruinate.
While all the earth is wanton, thou art cold,
For thy most cruel lifting of the spear
'Gainst Israel in her time of consternation.
Slain men shall fill thy mountains, O mount Seir!
Sith thou hast blood pursued, fell tribulation
Shall curse thy blessings, mock'd and unde-
plored:—
As I live, thou shalt know I am the Lord!

LONG yearnings had my soul to gaze upon

Fair Italy with atmosphere of fire;

On tawny Spain; on th' immemorial land

Where Time has dallied with the Parthenon

In beautiful affection and desire.

But when last even, effluently bland,

I saw sweet Luggie wind her amber waters

Thro' lawns of dew and glens of glimmering green,

And saw the comeliness of Scotland's daughters,

Their speaking eyes and modest mountain mien,—

I blest the Godhead over all presiding,

Who placed me here, removed from human strife,

Where Luggie, in her clear unwearied gliding,

Is but the image of my inner life.

SWEET Mavis! at this cool delicious hour
Of gloaming, when a pensive quietness
Hushes the odorous air,—with what a power
Of impulse unsubdued, thou dost express
Thyself a spirit! While the silver dew
Holy as manna on the meadow falls,
Thy song's impassioned clarity, trembling through
This omnipresent stillness, disenthral
The soul to adoration. First I heard
A low thick lubric gurgle, soft as love,
Yet sad as memory, thro' the silence poured
Like starlight. But the mood intenser grows,
Precipitate rapture quickens, move on move
Lucidly linked together, till the close.

O DEEP unlovely brooklet, moaning slow
Thro' moorish fen in utter loneliness!

The partridge cowers beside thy loamy flow
In pulseful tremor, when with sudden press
The huntsman flusters thro' the rustled heather.

In March thy sallow-buds from vermeil shells
Break satin-tinted, downy as the feather

Of moss-chat that among the purplish bells
Breasts into fresh new life her three unborn.

The plover hovers o'er thee, uttering clear
And mournful—strange, his human cry forlorn:

While wearily, alone, and void of cheer
Thou guid'st thy nameless waters from the fen,
To sleep unsunned in an untrampled glen.

WITH what a calm serenity she smooths
Her way thro' cloudless jasper sown with stars!
Chaster than virtue, sweeter than the truths
Of maidenhood, in Spenser's knightly wars.
For what is all Belphebe's golden hair,
The chastity of Britomart, the love
Of Florimel so faithful and so fair,
To thee, thou Wonder! And yet far above
Thy inoffensive beauty must I hold
Dear Una, sighing for the Red-cross Knight
Thro' all her losses, crosses manifold.
And when the lordly lion fell in fight,
Who, who can paragon her tearful woe?
Not thou, not thou, O Moon! didst ever passion so.

O PRECIOUS Morphia! I sanctify

The soothing power that in a painless swoon
Laps my weak limbs, giving me strength to lie,

Till sacred dawn increases until noon:

Then when, from his meridional height,

The sun devolves, and cooling breezes wake,
It is a comfort and divine delight

The weary bed exhausted to forsake,
And bathe my temples in the blessed air.

But when day wanes and the wind-moaning night
Deepens to darkness, then thy virtue rare,

O dream-creative liquid! brings delight,
Thy silver drops diffusive, kindly steep
The senses in the golden juice of sleep.

COME, light-foot Lady! from thy vaporous hall,
And, with a silver-swim into the air,
Shine down the starry cressets one and all
From Pleiades to golden Jupiter!
I see a growing tip of silver peep
Above the full-fed cloud, and lo! with motion
Of queenly stateliness, and smooth as sleep,
She glides into the blue for my devotion.
O sovran Beauty! standing here alone
Under the insufferable infinite,
I worship with dazed eyes and feeble moan,
Thy lucid persecution of delight.
Come, cloudy dimness! Dip, fair dream, again!
O God! I cannot gaze, for utter pain.

Maidenhood.

A SACRED land, to common men unknown,
A land of bowery glades and greenwoods hoary,
Still waters where white stars reflected shone,
And ancient castles in their ivied glory.
Fair knights caparison'd in golden mail,
And maidens whose enchantment was their beauty,
Met but to whisper each the passion-tale,
For love was all their pleasure and their duty.
Here cedar bark, as with a moving will,
Floated thro' liquid silver all untended;
Here wrong and baseness ever came to ill,
And virtue with delight was sweetly blended.
This land, dear Spenser! was thy fair creation,
Made thro' fine glamour of imagination.

PACTOLUS singeth over golden sand;
Scamander, old and blood-empurpled river,
Rolls yet her divine waters; Castaly
Flows lucid in the light of ancient song;
Whilst thou, sweet Luggie! fairest of this land,
And fair as any of that famous throng,
In pastoral, still loveliness, must be
Bald as a marshy brooklet nameless ever!
Nay, by the spirit of beauty and dear pleasure,
Sure I shall sing thee as my first delight,
Nurse of my soul, companion of my leisure!
And if in aftertime thy waters roll
More worthily, more spiritually bright,
It will be sunshine to my perfect soul.

O FOR the days of sweet Mythology,
 When dripping Naiads taught their streams to
 glide!

When, 'mid the greenery, one would oftentimes spy
 An Oread tripping with her face aside.

The dismal realms of Dis by Virgil sung,
 Whose shade led Dante, in his virtue bold,
 All the sad grief and agony among,

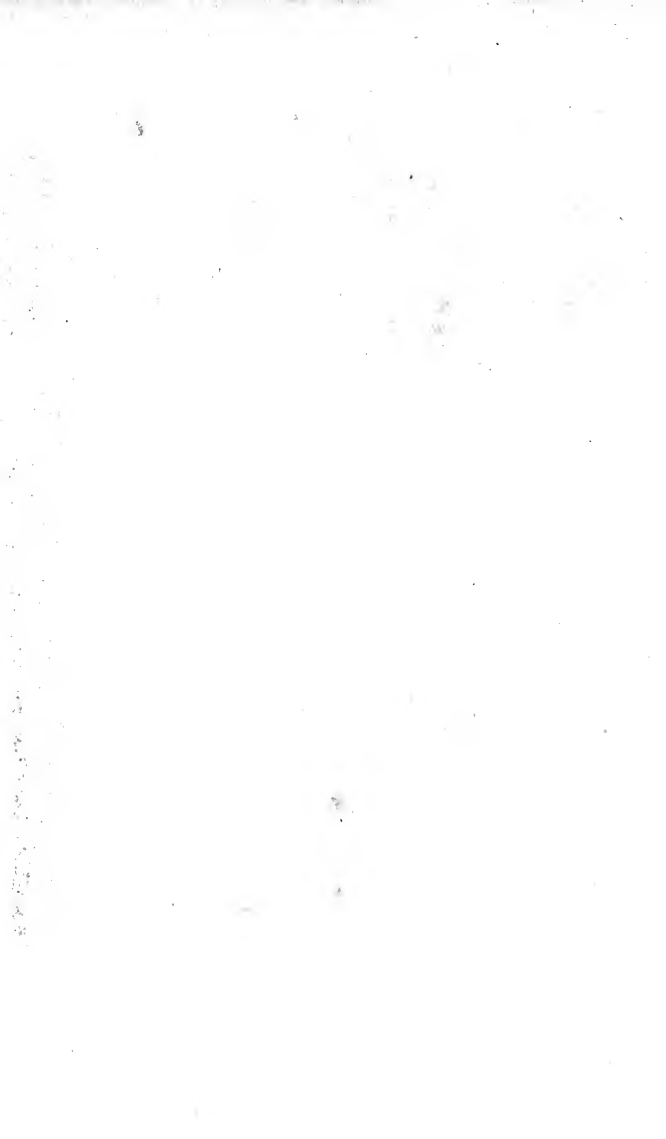
O'er Acheron, that mournful river old,
 Ev'n to the Stygian tide of purple gloom!

Pan in the forest making melody!

And far away where hoariest billows boom,
 Old Neptune's steeds with snorting nostrils high!

These were the ancient days of sunny song;
 Their memory yet how dear to the poetic throng!

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